

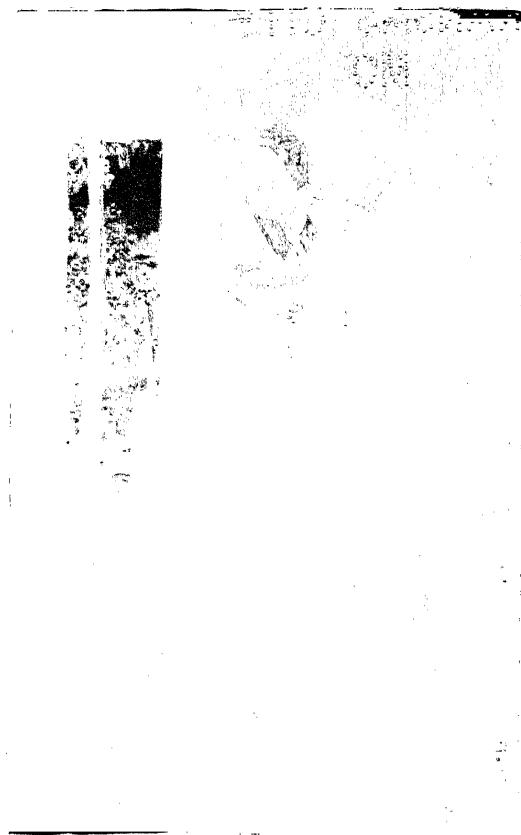
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HOLIDAY PLAYS



"Prithee, John, why do you not speak for yourself?"

HOLIDAY PLAYS

FIVE ONE-ACT PIECES FOR
WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY, LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY,
MEMORIAL DAY, FOURTH OF JULY
AND THANKSGIVING

By

MARGUERITE MERINGTON

Author of

"Cranford: a Play," "The Vicar of Wakefield: a Play" etc.



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CONTENTS

	PAGE
PRISCILLA, MYLES AND JOHN	7
<i>Thanksgiving Day.</i>	
A WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY PAGEANT	33
<i>Washington's Birthday.</i>	
THE FIRST FLAG	77
<i>Fourth of July.</i>	
ABE LINCOLN AND LITTLE A. D.	107
<i>Lincoln's Birthday.</i>	
THE DULCE ET DECORUM CLUB	131
<i>Memorial Day.</i>	

PRISCILLA, MYLES AND JOHN

Thanksgiving Day

TO ETHEL M. R.

AND ALL MAIDS OF KINDLY, HELPFUL TURN.

PRISCILLA, MYLES AND JOHN

CHARACTERS: *Priscilla, Myles and John, also Priscilla's mother, Mistress Mullens.*

TIME: *Autumn, A. D. 1621.*

SCENE: *The living-room in a log cabin in Plymouth Colony. A door, standing wide, opens on the village street; another, closed, leads to an inner room. A casement window with oiled paper in place of panes of glass is open. The furniture, of the period, is scant and plain. Priscilla is discovered sitting at her spinning wheel, and singing as she spins:*

*"Over the fountains and over the waves,
Under the fountains and under the graves,
Under floods that are deepest which Neptune obey,
Over rocks that are steepest Love will find out the way!"*

MISTRESS MULLENS.

[Enters from inner room.]

Priscilla! Priscilla! There is sickness at Governor Carver's, and Mr. Fuller hath asked me to assist in—
Priscilla!

PRISCILLA.

Aye, mother!

HOLIDAY PLAYS

MISTRESS MULLENS.

I'm going out, child. There is sickness down the road—at Governor Carver's. Nothing serious, but Mr. Fuller hath asked me to assist him in leeching. What art thou watching, child?

PRISCILLA.

Oh, naught to speak of, mother! Merely shadows!

MISTRESS MULLENS.

[*Follows PRISCILLA's gaze to the door.*] I see no shadows!

PRISCILLA.

They have passed by! But they will return anon, or my name at these presents is not Priscilla Mullens. [*To herself.*]

MISTRESS MULLENS.

What said you then, child?

PRISCILLA.

I only sent an idle phrase to chase the shadows! Ay, here they come: a tall shadow and a short one!

MISTRESS MULLENS.

And there they go—Captain Myles Standish with Master John Alden, whose company he hath affected much of late!

They both have done us many services since your poor father died. Perhaps it would be but friendly to invite them in, and——

PRISCILLA.

[*Hurriedly stopping her mother.*] Oh, no, mother!

MISTRESS MULLENS.

How now, child? Why so agitated over a simple proffer of simple hospitality?

PRISCILLA.

Nay, but—if they cross our threshold, let it be of their own accord! Captain Standish is an important man in our colony, while Master Alden is reckoned one of the most promising of the younger adventurers! And it might seem too forth-putting!

MISTRESS MULLENS.

Forth-putting! I like that! Was not your father a well-conditioned tradesman as well as a merchant adventurer of this enterprise? Why, child, you are quite a fortune! Under his will do you not inherit ten pounds in money, one-fourth interest in all his goods, including the boots and shoes he brought out here for purposes of traffic, one-sixth interest in the red cow that is to follow by the next boat that comes this way, not to speak of sundry articles including a betty lamp, a copper saucepan and a sundial!

HOLIDAY PLAYS

PRISCILLA.

I know, mother! Oh, I know! There they go again!

MISTRESS MULLENS.

'Tis true, there is not much choice of husbands for thee in our tiny band.

PRISCILLA.

I do not crave a choice!

MISTRESS MULLENS.

What say you? You crave not a husband?

PRISCILLA.

I say I crave not a choice of husbands! One will suffice me!

MISTRESS MULLENS.

My sauce box! Why, art fevered, child? Cheeks aflame. Can it be a touch of the plague?

PRISCILLA.

Nay, mother! I have been bending overlong at my stint, that is all!

MISTRESS MULLENS.

Then I leave the house in your care! And if our good neighbors should enter in my absence——

PRISCILLA.

Well, mother? What then?

MISTRESS MULLENS.

He is a good man, Priscilla. A pious, well-approved gentleman. His regard would honor any maiden. I trust you will not flout him!

PRISCILLA.

Flout him! Why, madam, ever since I have beheld Master Alden gaze upon me with a modestly favorable eye I have been the happiest maid in Plymouth Colony—in all the world, I do believe! Flout John Alden! John! [*Buries her face on her mother's shoulder.*]

MISTRESS MULLENS.

[*To herself, surprised, over PRISCILLA's head.*] Oho! John Alden! Sits the wind in that quarter! I had thought it was Captain Myles Standish! Nor am I sure that it is not, on his side, that is to say! Well, well, child! Give not your answer, even to your mother, till the question hath been asked of you! And then—be sure all will come out right!

PRISCILLA.

How good you are so to understand me! Fancy a great, tall youth like Master Alden being unable to pluck up resolution to plead his own cause so that he must needs

trouble Captain Standish to protect him! [*Sits at spinning wheel again.*] I vow he deserves not that I should entreat him kindly—that is, at first!

MISTRESS MULLENS.

Hm! I'll go make poultices, and leave you to your shadows! [*Takes cloak from peg and goes by the door to inner room. MYLES knocks at street door.*]

PRISCILLA.

Here come they now! Ahem! Who knocks?

MYLES.

Mistress Priscilla!

PRISCILLA.

O good-morrow, Captain Standish! Good-morrow, Master Alden! Enter pray! [*MYLES enters, followed by JOHN.*]

MYLES.

We would speak with Mistress Mullens!

PRISCILLA.

My mother is presently abroad, ministering to a sick neighbor. Pray be seated. She will return anon! [*They sit.*]

MYLES.

You sang the while you span. As John Alden said, it did mind us pleasingly of our English nightingale! [*Interrupts JOHN who would protest.*] Aye, so did you, John, and well done, too! What is the song, Mistress?

PRISCILLA.

'Twas being newly sung in London when we left last year. "Love will find out the way!"

MYLES.

"Love will find out the way!" A favorable omen, John! [*JOHN nods assent, but sighs.*]

PRISCILLA.

Gay ditties still rise to my lips, where, perchance, good Elder Brewster would say psalms should be more frequent!

MYLES.

O for all his zeal for religious freedom, Master Brewster is no long-visaged scorner of cheerfulness! Why, but even now, meeting us coming hither, he said— Quote what Master Brewster said, John!

JOHN.

Not I!

PRISCILLA.

I pray you!

JOHN.

It fits not the occasion, Mistress!

MYLES.

O but 'tis most apt to it!

JOHN.

Then, quote yourself forsooth, Captain!

MYLES.

Sooner would I cut out my tongue—before a maid!

JOHN.

Mine own case, like as two staves of a barrel!

PRISCILLA.

Yon goeth Master Brewster! I shall go question him!

MYLES AND JOHN.

Mistress Priscilla! Prithee forbear!

PRISCILLA.

Not unless you yourselves inform me! Well?

MYLES.

He said—Master Brewster said—"Here we are!"

PRISCILLA.

A wonderful discovery! Here we are! I trust you ventured not to contradict it! But is that all?

JOHN.

Nay, to do him justice. Here we are, he said, a handful of English folk together in a strange new world! But a scant score of men souls; half so many women souls—and some children! The rest who started forth upon our pilgrim venture asleep on Burial Hill. The ocean between us and all civil countries! With little solace in respect to outward objects whichever way we turn the eye—save upward! Then, since many of our number do be widowers——

MYLES.

And some bachelors! Forget not that, John!

JOHN.

And some by the grace of God bachelors——[PRISCILLA *coughs.*] And some of the women being widows——

PRISCILLA.

And some spinsters by the grace of God! Well! Proceed! Or, stay! I divine what Master Brewster did ad-

vise accordingly! Such being our forlorn state, 'twere best to make an end on't, offering ourselves as victims to Indian arrows or the plague!

MYLES.

Nay, indeed, Mistress! Not so! Tell her, John!

JOHN.

He said nowt would please him better than to cry the banns of any well-matched couple, and in his office of magistrate to join the same as man and wife! [*Mops brow.*]

MYLES.

Well done!

PRISCILLA.

I do protest, gentlemen, I see nowt in that so startling! Unless, in sooth, you have been perverted by the Indians, who think it a grievous fate for a man to be tied to but one wife!

MYLES AND JOHN.

Oh, Mistress Priscilla!

PRISCILLA.

And now, since my mother may be tarrying beyond her errand over the gossip of the colony, I will inform her of your presence! Meanwhile if you do run away I shall take it that you are afeared!

MYLES AND JOHN.

Afeared, Mistress! Prithee of what danger?

PRISCILLA.

For that ask Master Brewster! [*Laughs and runs out.*]

MYLES.

Now what, think you, meant she by that, John?

JOHN.

Truly, Captain, I know not! It may have been a mere woman's pointless pleasantry for the sake of being pleasant!

MYLES.

Aye, pleasant is she in sooth! 'Twould be a sore fate to be bound to a froward, waspish tongue! [*JOHN assents.*] Pleasant is this maid, and fair—fair as——

JOHN.

Aye, as the flower of the May that doth whiten our English hedges in the spring!

MYLES.

Well said, John! Art quite a poet! [*JOHN disclaims.*] You'll recite to the maid all these fine things I do think of her but know not how to phrase?

JOHN.

Aye, sooth, that will I, unless my tongue belie me. Fair, nightingale and pleasant!

MYLES.

Also, since she is under covert of her parent, the mother must be won. Name to Mistress Mullens with what substantial goods I can endow her daughter!

JOHN.

Aye, I did note them with particularity. Item, one house with windows of glass where others are fain to use paper soaked in linseed oil. Item, one copy of Cæsar's Commentaries and a coat-of-mail——

MYLES.

My Rose had all these things—and the plague took her in the spring! [*Goes to window.*] No stone marks it, yet can I pick out the very spot upon the hillside where she lies!

JOHN.

Captain—'tis but autumn! What if the maid thinks you come a-courting over soon?

MYLES.

Then put her right, as you best know the way! Even as our graves are level and unmarked lest hostile Indians

learn how many of our colony sleep underground, while corn grows over them, so must the griefs we sowed in spring whiten to the harvest's happiness! Little more than a year, but we've lived a lifetime since we left the old Plymouth for the new! Our colony needs sons and daughters who shall say, our Pilgrim fathers were Englishmen who crossed the seas to found a new England dedicated to religious liberty!

JOHN.

Captain, such eloquence—plead your own cause with the maiden!

MYLES.

I! A plain, blunt soldier! Besides, my tongue forgets youth's odd-knackereries of talk! Why, John, I am——

JOHN.

In the flower of your prime!

MYLES.

Lad, in a group where the oldest man is barely turned forty, thirty-six is growing old! [JOHN *tries to protest.*] John, when I hold parley with the Indians I take the Indian Squanto for interpreter! So, now, lacking youth, I call on your two and twenty years to interpret betwixt me and this maid! Why, John, art sick? Hast fever, ague, or a queasy stomach? Pray go get Master Fuller to physic thee!

JOHN.

'Tis nowt, sir! Just a passing feeling! Captain Myles Standish, I do pledge myself to plead your cause as 'twere mine own!

MYLES.

Friend, I thank thee! And so when thy turn comes do I pledge myself to do for thee!

[*They clasp hands. PRISCILLA enters.*]

PRISCILLA.

My mother follows, sirs. Meanwhile she bids me offer entertainment: a stoup of beer, or strong waters from my father's store.

JOHN.

I thank you, none! I'll go meet Mistress Mullens ere my courage oozes out! [*Goes out.*]

MYLES.

A brave lad that, and comely of feature!

PRISCILLA.

Truly he hath a good conceit of his back, if it be not fear that ever makes him turn it on me!

MYLES.

Oh, Mistress Priscilla! But to hear him! I warrant you he hath a tongue!

PRISCILLA.

He proves it by his faculty for holding it!

MYLES.

Ere long, I promise you, you'll hear it wag! Mistress Priscilla, when he asks you something will you hearken to him kindly?

PRISCILLA.

Now what in the world could Master Alden ever ask of me?

MYLES.

There's but one thing ever a man asks of any woman!

PRISCILLA.

Now, pardon, Captain, I have heard both father and brother ask my mother many things!

MYLES.

And, pardon, Mistress Priscilla, but a man's requests to mother, wife, however lovingly preferred and granted, are but in sooth commands!

PRISCILLA.

Indeed? 'Tis good in you so to interest yourself in Master Alden's affairs, Captain!

MYLES.

A goodness that I trust will redound to mine own profit!

PRISCILLA.

Now what means he by that? My distaff's empty. I must fetch more yarn!

[*Goes into inner room. JOHN returns.*]

MYLES.

Thank Heaven you come, John! I had nearly spoiled my cause by broaching it! Well?

JOHN.

Mistress Mullens gives willing consent, but would put no constraint upon her daughter, who must herself be sued!

MYLES.

Then go to, boy; sue her! I have prepared the way!

JOHN.

Captain, stay by me to prompt my speech!

MYLES.

Nay! [*About to go.*]

JOHN.

Yea! [*Detaining him.*]

PRISCILLA.

[*Has entered.*] What means this yea-and-naying?

[*Both men show embarrassment. Suddenly loud discordant sounds from a trumpet are heard without.*]

PRISCILLA shrieks with fright.]

MYLES.

Fear nowt, Mistress! 'Tis but an Indian sagamore who came to truck with us! To keep him from counting our diminished numbers I lent him our trumpet to practise on! [*Louder noise.*] I'll go stay him! Go to, John, lad! Sue her! I've prepared the way! [*Goes out hurriedly.*]

JOHN.

A valiant man in sooth is Captain Myles Standish!

PRISCILLA.

Aye, Master Alden, like yourself, he never seems afeared—to run away!

JOHN.

Oh, Mistress Priscilla, when he bears a commission from Queen Elizabeth, is renowned for victories against the Spaniards in the Lowlands, and now is termed the Sword-hand of our colony!

PRISCILLA.

Tell me of your own occupation, Master Alden.

JOHN.

Indeed, Mistress, I do but wield a cleaver, as you know, to bring in clapboard from the forest to make staves for kilderkin! But——

PRISCILLA.

But you do write a fair and clerkly hand, and, some say, will be next assistant to the Governor—and, who knows? Some day Governor.

JOHN.

It may be! Goodly to look upon, do you not think Captain Standish?

PRISCILLA.

He casts a short shadow, even as Master Alden casts a tall one!

JOHN.

Oh, Mistress! A little man, but a great captain! Like the vessel Mayflower, small but staunch! Kind of heart, and in this world's goods plentifully endowed. He uses silverware where the rest of us pilgrims drink our beer from pewter. Then, next boat will bring him glass for his windows, while our share of sunlight comes through oiled paper. And soon will he build him a large house, patterned and named after his ancestral home of Duxborough. Also is he heir to a vast estate, which presently is being surreptitiously detained from him by legal villainy!

PRISCILLA.

Truly am I myself something of a fortune, and though no match in that respect for Captain Standish, yet, wed or single, need I fear no poverty. Had you heard my mother not an hour ago enumerate the articles of my inheritance—ten pounds in money, boots and shoes to sell, one-sixth of a red cow that is to follow us out here from Surrey, not to speak of one betty lamp, a copper kettle and a sundial!

JOHN.

A fitting match indeed! [*Sighs.*]

PRISCILLA.

Eh? What said you then? Surely you fear not my worldly goods will make my spirit proud!

JOHN.

Oh, Mistress! As well accuse the turtle dove of pride! But, harking back to Myles Standish, though not a church-member he is——

PRISCILLA.

Oh, a most pious, well-approved gentleman! In truth, half-orphaned as I am I do look upon him something as a father!

JOHN.

Oh, Mistress! Pray you cast out that thought! A father!

PRISCILLA.

But, why so astonished, prithee, Master Alden?

JOHN.

Because—because—have you not guessed my errand?

PRISCILLA.

Indeed, sir, I did think—did hope, perhaps—Nought!

JOHN.

To hark back to Captain Standish. He appoints me his trusted ambassador. He commissions me to entreat your hand in marriage!

PRISCILLA.

My hand! In marriage! With—with whom?

JOHN.

With whom but himself, Captain Myles Standish! Mistress Priscilla, I entreat you, do not so cover your face with your hands and rock to and fro, so that I know not whether you do laugh or cry! O blunderbuss am I so to fright an unsuspecting maid with talk of marriage! Dear Mistress, sooner would I with mine own cleaver make clapboard of myself than distress you! Prithee . . . [*takes her*

hand]. Nay, look not out of window, nor toward the door—nor upward to the rafters, nor on the floor beneath! I offer you that of which any woman might be proud—a good man's love. There, let me fan thee with my hat, while you do so gasp for breath! That's better! And now, my answer! I mean, to hark back to Captain Myles Standish—

PRISCILLA.

Captain Myles Standish—Master John Alden—

JOHN.

Aye, a brave beginning. Captain Myles Standish! Well!

PRISCILLA.

John Alden—prithee why do you not speak for yourself, John?

JOHN.

Priscilla! Dear—dearest—[*Takes her hand and kisses it. At the moment Myles enters, stands amazed.*]

MYLES.

Great Providence! What is this I behold! [*Turns to go.*]

JOHN.

[*Turns, sees him.*] Oh, shame on me! A friend forsworn! A false ambassador! Oh, death were my desert! [*About to go.*]

MYLES.

[*Detains him.*] Try marriage instead! Nay, John Alden! On my soul I know you did your honorable best for me!

PRISCILLA.

Aye, sir. That did he, but——

MYLES.

But by the grace of God, and with your timely aid, unwittingly he spake better for himself! Eh, Mistress Priscilla? 'Tis natural. Youth speaks to youth for youth.

MISTRESS MULLENS.

[*Enters from inner room.*] Why, what means this romantical hand-clasping! Priscilla, gentlemen!

MYLES.

Good Mistress Mullens, I did promise my friend John, and do stand pledged, to speak for him, in his behalf, should his love-suit need an intercessor! But by the kindly glimmer in your eye I do think his cause already won!

JOHN.

Oh, Mistress Mullens—Priscilla——

PRISCILLA.

Aye, mother! John——

MISTRESS MULLENS.

A blessing on you both, my children!—Captain Myles Standish, honor us by pledging a toast! [*Gets out wine.*]

MYLES.

Aye, a toast! Youth speaks to youth for youth, and all is well with Plymouth Colony!

A WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY
PAGEANT

Washington's Birthday

TO GEORGE G. R.
AND ALL BOYS WHO DO THEIR DUTY.

A WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY PAGEANT

Taking place in the library of Sunnyside, Washington Irving's house at Irvington-on-Hudson, on February 22, 1859.

The room has two doors. By one of these, called the first door, the characters make their first entrance. By the other, called the second door, they make their final exit. There is a window. A small table stands near the first door. On it lie unopened letters of the fashion of the year. On one side of the room, against the wall, and near the audience, stands a fine new library table. On it lies a letter, unopened, unstamped. By it stands a comfortable chair. Shelves with books line the walls, but except for a chair or so the floor space is unencumbered. Washington Irving, now 76 years old, is the sole character outside the pageant which is supposed to take place in his fancy, the audience seeing it as it passes before his inward eye while he muses in his easy chair.

CHARACTERS IN THE PAGEANT.

SCENE I.

[*At the Washington home in Virginia, Feb. 22, 1747.*]

GEORGE WASHINGTON, aged fifteen. —

MRS. WASHINGTON, his mother, a widow, still young.

THOMAS, LORD FAIRFAX, an English nobleman of middle age.

A colored servant.

SCENE II.

[*A room in Washington's headquarters at Valley Forge, Feb. 22, 1778.*]

GENERAL WASHINGTON, *Commander of the Armies of America.*

COLONEL FITZGERALD, *one of Washington's aides.*

DR. CRAIK, *of the Medical Staff of the Army.*

MR. BRYAN FAIRFAX, *of Belvoir.*

COLONEL ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

WILLIAM LEE (BILLY), *Washington's mulatto servant.*

TWO SOLDIERS *of the Provincial Army.*

MRS. WASHINGTON, *wife of the General.*

MRS. GREENE, *wife of Gen. Greene.*

MRS. KNOX, *wife of Gen. Knox.*

MARY, *a child.*

[*Other gentlemen of Washington's military family with their wives may appear at the close.*]

SCENE III.

[*A room at Mt. Vernon, Feb. 22, 1799.*]

GEORGE WASHINGTON, *ex-President of the United States.*

MAJOR LAWRENCE LEWIS, *his nephew.*

COL. LEAR, *his secretary.*

GEORGE WASHINGTON LAFAYETTE, *son of the Marquis de Lafayette.*

BILLY.

MRS. WASHINGTON.

ELEANOR PARKE CUSTIS, *her granddaughter (Nellie).*

Three different individuals are needed to personate Washington in the several scenes, and two to personate Martha Washington. The same individual may represent the two Lafayettes, provided the change of costume can be effected in time. The slightest delay in entrances will spoil the illusion.

A WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY PAGEANT

IRVING.

[*Enters, rather wearily, speaking to himself.*] And now for the day's work! Ah, dear me; I fear I have an attack of old age! How beautiful it would be if one could begin life at the end, being born old; then, working through maturity to youth, cut one's first tooth at seventy, and die young, a happy child!

[*He comes upon his mail.*] Letters, letters, letters! [*He picks up one and examines it.*] "Mr. Washington Irving, Sunnyside, Irvington-on-Hudson, New York." A lady's hand. Probably wants my autograph.

[*Opens letter, and glances over the contents.*] "Dear Sir, although a stranger—venture to inquire, were you named after George Washington?"—Yes, dear Madam, since it interests you to know, such is the case! I happened to be born in 1783, the year that, the struggle for independence safely over, George Washington resigned his commission as commander-in-chief, and, though I don't recall the circumstance, I'm told my dear mother said, "Washington's work is ended, and our child shall be named after him!" And so I was baptized in St. George's Chapel in Beekman Street, New York! Well, at least it procured for me a benediction from the illustrious man himself!

Well do I remember how my Scotch nurse Lizzie followed Washington into a shop, dragging me by the hand after her. He was President of the United States then, but that didn't abash Lizzie! "Please your Honor," said she—"Please your Honor, here's a bairn named after you!" My head was then where my knee is now. And stooping, Washington laid his hand on it and blessed me!—And now to work to finish the story of his life! Wait, though! More letters! One from England. To be sure, it's Charles Dickens' writing. Glorious Dickens, I'll save that for a treat. And this is from Prescott; dear, friendly Prescott! [*Opens the letter, and reads.*] "I have just closed the fourth volume of your life of Washington. I never before fully comprehended the character of— No one—no American, could read this without finding pretty often a tear blurring the page!"— And here's one from Bancroft, and one from Brace. [*He reads a snatch of this letter.*] "Washington looms out grandly. Were I a boy I should read his life like Robinson Crusoe or Captain Cook's Adventures!"—I wonder indeed if I have succeeded in making it interesting—this story of Washington—to boys and girls! [*He has crossed the room while speaking, and now comes upon the new library table.*] Why, what's this! What a fine affair! But how comes it here? [*He picks up the letter lying on the table and reads.*] "A birthday present from your publishers." A birthday—why, it isn't my birthday! [*He looks at a calendar on the table.*] February the twenty-second. Oh, of course! A Washington's birthday present! Ha, ha, ha! How thoughtful! Let me see; this is 1859. Sixty years since Washington died. A hundred and twenty-seven years since he was born. And

A WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY PAGEANT 41

his birthday still is kept! I wonder if boys and girls in times to come will read what he did for our country and keep his birthday always! [*He sits in the easy chair beside the table, and fingers his papers absently.*] If they could only see him as I do, young, ardent, with tastes and ambitions like their own—in those early days, with his mother, in their Virginia home—[*Leans back, eyes closed.*]

SCENE I.

MRS. WASHINGTON.

[*Enters, with workbasket and an opened letter first door.*] George! George! Where are you, my son? What, out since daybreak and not yet returned! [*Sits at window, works.*]

GEORGE.

[*Outside.*] Halloa! Halloa! Mulatto Jack! Come, take my horse!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Here comes he now! What a fine, tall, sturdy youth he grows! Noble and distinguished looking, like his father, though not for worlds would I have him hear me say so!

GEORGE.

Mother! [*Enters, first door.*] Good morning, madam!

HOLIDAY PLAYS

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Well, my son! Had you good sport?

GEORGE.

Tolerable good! After a hard chase I caught a fox! But I have a confession to make! I fear I taxed one of the colts beyond its strength in trying to break it! Apart from your just displeasure it grieves me sorely to cause a creature suffering!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

You do well to confess your fault! [*A slight pause.*]
George, the English packet brought me a letter——

GEORGE.

Aye, so I could not but observe, in my Uncle Ball's hand.
Pray, madam, is it settled that I may go to sea?

MRS. WASHINGTON.

It is settled otherwise!

GEORGE.

Oh, oh! I had set my heart—Indeed, madam, I mean no rebellion against your authority, nor disrespect to my uncle's advice—but I had so hoped——

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Be seated, my son! [GEORGE obeys.] Two years ago your father was taken from us, leaving me with five children to bring up. You are my eldest. You are almost a man! Why, this very day you are fifteen!

GEORGE.

I understand, madam. Yet—I own—a sailor's life—adventure——! [*Goes hurriedly to the window.*] Pray believe that—I obey you—ch—ch—cheerfully!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

[*To herself.*] My good lad!

LORD FAIRFAX.

[*Outside.*] Halloo, halloo, there! You lazy black rascals!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Who comes?

GEORGE.

Lord Fairfax!

HOLIDAY PLAYS

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Lord Fairfax! Aye, I hear that he has come from London to visit his estates! Go wait on his lordship! Nay; you're disordered with your ride. Go make yourself fit to be seen!

SERVANT.

[*At the first door announces.*] Lord Fairfax!
[*GEORGE goes by the second door.*]

LORD FAIRFAX.

[*Enters, bows low.*] Mrs. Washington!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

[*Curtseys low.*] Welcome, Lord Fairfax; welcome!

LORD FAIRFAX.

I thank you, madam. Indeed welcome never seems to fail in hospitable Virginia!

[*The SERVANT places chairs. They sit.*]

MRS. WASHINGTON.

[*To SERVANT.*] Set another place at table, and——

[*Whispers and gives SERVANT her keys. SERVANT bows and goes by second door.*]

LORD FAIRFAX.

I rode over to pay my respects—our families are connected by marriage!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Your courtesy needs no such excuse! [*Both bow.*]

LORD FAIRFAX.

Also I am much interested in what my kinsman, William Fairfax, tells me of your eldest son.

MRS. WASHINGTON.

[*Primly.*] George is a good lad, my lord!

LORD FAIRFAX.

That and more, I'm told. A youth of parts and spirit!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

[*With sudden eloquence.*] Indeed, sir, though I would not have him hear me praise him, George is something quite out of the common! Hobby, the sexton, who taught him to write, said there never was such a little fist for pot-hooks! He can ride with the best. He's a perfect marksman. He can wrestle, leap and throw! Why, he can throw a stone clear across the Rappahannock—and you can see for yourself how wide it runs between our meadows and Fredericksburg on the opposite shore. George has formed a little company of his schoolfellows and drills

them in military exercises! Many of them are much older, but they all obey him. Somehow George always leads. He has a way of getting down to the rights of things, and so they trust him, because it is for the sake of having things right, and not for himself! While Mr. Washington lived he was most attentive to George's education, but now George goes to school with Mr. Williams. Here are his books! You can see the orderly way he keeps them! [*Shows books.*]

LORD FAIRFAX.

[*Examining the books.*] A clear, firm hand. Arithmetic, geometry. Copies of indentures, bonds, leases. Elements of surveying. Selections of rhyme, and—what is this! An original sentiment! “Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called conscience!”

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Aye! And that is my George!

LORD FAIRFAX.

But may I not meet this young gentleman?

MRS. WASHINGTON.

He will wait on your lordship directly. I sent him to wash the tear stains from his face!

LORD FAIRFAX.

Tear stains? This precocious youth! This model of discretion! Tears!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

[*Nods yes.*] Though he never would forgive me for noticing them! His heart was set on going to sea, for the adventure of it!

LORD FAIRFAX.

But are there obstacles? I am not without influence. A midshipman's commission can easily be procured for him.

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Oh, sir! Pray hold not out so great a lure! You see he is my first-born—and though I would not have him know it, the apple of my eye! Think what might not happen to him at sea! The wind—the waves—and the French!

LORD FAIRFAX.

I understand!

GEORGE.

[*Enters.*] My Lord Fairfax! [*Bows low.*] Your servant, sir!

LORD FAIRFAX.

[*Shakes hands with GEORGE.*] I have heard much of you, sir, from my kinsman, William, and from your esteemed half-brother, Mr. Lawrence Washington!

GEORGE.

I am obliged for their good opinion, sir, and for your lordship's kindness.

LORD FAIRFAX.

I hear you are a keen huntsman!

GEORGE.

Oh, sir! Only to-day I caught a fox—not the common gray kind, but a big black one. Will your lordship allow me to present you with the brush?

LORD FAIRFAX.

I thank you, sir! We must have some rides together! I, too, am untiring in the saddle. Oh, and if you are fond of reading pray make all use of my library at Belvoir!

GEORGE.

I know not how to thank your lordship!

LORD FAIRFAX.

Oh, and, by the way, your mother tells me you are interested in surveying. When you shall have mastered it I shall do myself the pleasure of giving you your first commission—to make maps and define boundaries of my possessions beyond the Blue Ridge!

GEORGE.

Oh, sir! How can I thank you! Mother, do you hear that!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Your lordship is most kind!

SERVANT.

[*At second door.*] Dinner is served, madam!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Come, sir. You must be famished after your ride!

LORD FAIRFAX.

[*Giving his arm to* MRS. WASHINGTON.] We'll drink to the health of my new surveyor! You'll find there are adventures a-plenty by land as well as by sea, George!

GEORGE.

Lord Fairfax—who told you—! [LORD FAIRFAX *laughs, goes out with* MRS. WASHINGTON *by second door.* GEORGE *is about to follow, when with a sudden impulse he turns back and blows a kiss out of window.*] O river! Bear my good-bye to the sea! To the sea of my dreams—to my dreams of the sea! I'm fifteen now—almost a man! I must put my dreams behind my duty!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

[*Looks in.*] Where is my son?

LORD FAIRFAX.

[*Looks in.*] Where is my surveyor?

GEORGE.

Sir, madam, I come!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

He is a good boy, sir. He will do his duty!

[*All pass out.*]

IRVING.

[*Rousing himself, rises, and walks about.*] Washington the trusted surveyor—leader of the Virginia forces—aide—trusted ambassador of Dinwiddie to the French on La Belle Rivière—commended in the house of Burgesses—in the English Parliament! Gallant aide to Braddock. Then when the Revolutionary storm broke forth, chosen against his will to lead what might, but for him, have proved the forlornest of forlorn hopes, lost causes! The iron will, the tact, that held the army together—that wonderful year's work in the Jerseys—that cruel winter at Valley Forge——! [*Sits again, and muses.*]

SCENE II.

WASHINGTON.

[Enters first door with preoccupied manner. Speaks to himself while removing military cloak and hat.] Which way to turn for succor! An incompetent Congress, an indifferent people, a starving army! Whence shall I seek aid! *[Goes out by second door, taking cloak and hat.]*

MARY.

[At first door with sprig of pine.] General! General Washington! I've brought you a birthday present! *[Not seeing him she goes to second door, opens it, closes it very softly.]*

BILLY.

[Entering first door, sees her.] Dat's right, li'l Miss Ma'y! I declar if it wasn't fo' yo' an' me de Gen'l ud get no rest at all, what wiv his officers pestring ter know what ter do every time de enemy done pokes his nose roun' de cornah! No rest at all! Nossuh!

[COL. FITZGERALD and DR. CRAIK have entered, first door, during this. They now laugh.]

DR. CRAIK.

Bravo, Billy! Well said!

BILLY.

Yo' pahd'n, gen'lmen, but de Gen'l he don't get no rest——

FITZGERALD.

True! Yet since he may need me—Sentry, mayn't I pass the line? I can give the countersign, Victory or Death! [MARY *shakes head no.*] Come, not for a present and a kiss?

MARY.

Only across my prostrate body! [*All laugh. BILLY goes off, first door, chuckling.*]

DR. CRAIK.

Ha, ha! I always knew my friend's presence to create a sentimental disorder among the caps, but this devotion of our little neighbor passes all.

FITZGERALD.

He works, planning, writing to Congress, till his taper burns out, each night! Let him sleep awhile! [*Goes to window.*] Halloa! White and scarlet liveries! 'Tis Mrs. Washington!

DR. CRAIK.

Aye! I would say, let us go hand her from her coach, but that we are anticipated by two pretty sprigs, Colonel Hamilton and the Marquis de Lafayette!

FITZGERALD.

Also, I see the wives of Generals Greene and Knox are here to welcome her!

BILLY.

[*At first door announces.*] Mrs. Washington! Go right in, Miss Martha!

[*MRS. WASHINGTON enters with MRS. GREENE and FAIRFAX.*]

FITZGERALD AND DR. CRAIK.

[*Saluting.*] Mrs. Washington! Ladies!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

[*Cordially, a hand to each.*] Colonel Fitzgerald! Dr. Craik!

FITZGERALD.

This is an agreeable surprise, madam! The General looked not for you till to-morrow!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

I stole a day's march on him, to join him on his birthday! Our neighbor, Mr. Bryan Fairfax of Belvoir, rid with me! [*All acknowledge the introduction.*] Is Mr. Washington within?

FITZGERALD.

Aye, madam, but it is a life's purchase to pass the guard!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Why, what is this, my pretty dear? [*MARY taps lips.*] So? He sleeps? I love thy loyalty! Give notice when he stirs. [*Sits.*] Meanwhile, gentlemen, you who are so near to him, talk to me of my husband! His rule, as you know, is no women in camp during action! I only hear the closing shot of one campaign, the opening of the next! The anxious interval we wives must spend at home, waiting for news, eh, ladies? [*The ladies assent.*] Of the movements of the army Mr. Washington keeps me fully posted, but the best and the worst, his triumphs and sufferings, I only learn from others!

MRS. GREENE.

[*Also seated.*] Sometime, madam, you must let me read you passages from General Greene's letters! When you hear how General Washington made them cross the Delaware you'll both laugh and cry!

MRS. KNOX.

Did you hear, madam, how the General rallied his officers at Trenton when their spirits flagged? Giving the view-halloo he brandished his sword, and spurred his horse, crying, Forward, gentlemen, for an old-fashioned Virginia fox-hunt! Forward! Hal-loo! [*All applaud.*]

FITZGERALD.

Madam, there is a serious complaint against the General in the army!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

[*With spirit.*] A complaint, sir! And that is——? Nay, tell me not! I hear no complaints of Mr. Washington! [*All applaud.*]

FITZGERALD.

Madam, it is but that he exposes himself to danger all too recklessly! When the battle halts, the soldiers falter—he gallops to the fore, and—Well, at Princeton I dropped my reins on my horse's neck and drew my hat down over my face! I could not bear to see my beloved commander die!

[*With emotion. All murmur sympathy.*]

FAIRFAX.

Have you never heard—when he was but a youth campaigning with Braddock, horses were shot under him, bullets pierced his coat—but never a hair of his head was scathed! 'Twas then the Indians said he was under protection of the Great Spirit, leading a charmed life, and would some day be hailed as founder of a mighty empire!

FITZGERALD.

God grant it prove so!

ALL.

Amen!

MARY.

You may go in now! The General says Amen!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Lead the way, child! Come, Mr. Fairfax; we'll surprise him!

[MRS. WASHINGTON, FAIRFAX, and MARY go by second door, MRS. GREENE and MRS. KNOX exchange glances as if to say, *Let us retire for the present, and go by first door.*]

FITZGERALD.

The General says Amen! One might have known it would be either work or prayer, not sleep, that engaged him at a crisis!

DR. CRAIK.

A crisis? Anything fresh?

FITZGERALD.

Only the wonted barrel of gunpowder on which we live! Troops on the verge of mutiny, officers desirous of resigning! As for Congress——

DR. CRAIK.

[*Hands raised.*] Congress! Only ten or twelve members to be got together for a session! The rest at home minding their own personal or State affairs! Few are there who are patriotic enough to echo Patrick Henry's noble words, At a national crisis I am no longer a Virginian; I am an American!

FITZGERALD.

True! And now there's a conspiracy to displace Washington and put Gates in his stead!

DR. CRAIK.

[*Hands raised.*] Gates! Gates for Washington! After Princeton, too! Why, von Steuben says the Germans call Washington's work in the Jerseys the greatest campaign of the century!

FITZGERALD.

But I wonder if ever the day will come when his own people understand how truly great he is!

[*Enter, by second door, WASHINGTON, MRS. WASHINGTON, FAIRFAX, and MARY, who holds WASHINGTON'S hand, while he wears her sprig of pine.*]

WASHINGTON.

Gentlemen, I have kept you overlong! Bryan Fairfax, old friend, give my lady your arm to see Baron von Steuben's drill. He is working wonders with our soldiery!

FITZGERALD.

And you might add, sir, with many of our officers!

DR. CRAIK.

But how's this? I thought Mr. Fairfax to be a loyalist!

FAIRFAX.

True, doctor! My principles forbid my abjuring allegiance to Great Britain—my mother country!

WASHINGTON.

And his heart prevents him from bearing arms against his brothers, the Provincials, eh, Bryan?

FAIRFAX.

The case in a nutshell, George!

WASHINGTON.

My dear Patsy, I must warn you that the Baron, though the most high-minded of gentlemen, when out of patience with our raw recruits is like to—Ahem!

FITZGERALD.

Ahem!

DR. CRAIK.

[*Hands raised.*] Ahem!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Ahem!

WASHINGTON.

In three languages! [*All laugh.* MRS. WASHINGTON, FAIRFAX and the child go by the first door.] Well, friends, of course the old story about the alarming situation of our army! But—any new counsels, fresh remedies to advise?

FITZGERALD.

Oh, sir, for those we always come to you!

WASHINGTON.

But, first—Doctor, you come recently from the seat of Congress?

DR. CRAIK.

[*Hands raised.*] Congress! The majority think our cause is lost because General Howe has taken Philadelphia!

WASHINGTON.

Or, rather, as Mr. Franklin put it, Philadelphia has taken General Howe! Long may he remain there, enjoying its hospitalities while we get our wretched forces into some sort of shape! Did we expose our weakness at this

moment—three thousand men in hospital, barely eight thousand men, and those miserably equipped, on our rolls—! Why, friends, had the British known that at Bunker Hill the Americans had but nine cartridges to a man they would have made a second onset that would simply have annihilated our army!

DR. CRAIK.

True, sir! And yet— 'Tis not my own opinion, which ever coincides with yours—but there are those who clamor for a short war and violent!

WASHINGTON.

A short war and violent! How easy to drink the toast in a comfortable room by a warm fireside! While we— Billy! Billy!

BILLY.

[*Appears at first door.*] Yes, Gen'l?

WASHINGTON.

[*Looking out of window.*] Two soldiers are passing. Bring them in here to me!

BILLY.

Aye, Gen'l! [*Goes out, first door.*]

WASHINGTON.

An army of farmers' boys, more skilled with pick and plough than musket! Pitted against the most splendidly drilled, bravest soldiery on earth, and people call for a short war, and——[*Breaks off as BILLY ushers in two soldiers. One, an elderly man, is emaciated. The younger is ragged and almost barefoot. They salute. WASHINGTON looks at them, then addresses the elder.*] How long since you tasted bread?

1ST SOLDIER.

Two days, sir!

WASHINGTON.

But you've had meat!

1ST SOLDIER.

A morsel or so, sir!

WASHINGTON.

And before that——?

1ST SOLDIER.

Bread and no meat, sir!

WASHINGTON.

[*To the younger.*] Do you sleep warm by night?

2ND SOLDIER.

When it is my turn for the blanket, sir! You know in our company the men take turns, one sits by the fire one night, the other he sleeps in the blanket——

WASHINGTON.

On the frozen ground, eh? [*The boy nods yes.*] But you're ready to fight, eh, boys?

BOTH.

Aye, aye, sir! [*With enthusiasm.*]

1ST SOLDIER.

Fighting is easier than starving, your Honor!

2ND SOLDIER.

It warms up the blood, your Excellency!

WASHINGTON.

Don't lose heart, boys! Better times are coming!

1ST SOLDIER.

Your Honor pledged your own private fortune for our pay—and we trust you——

2ND SOLDIER.

Aye, that do we—to the death!

WASHINGTON.

Trust in God and a good cause, boys! The lives and liberties of three million people depend on you!

SOLDIERS.

Aye, aye, sir! God bless your Honor!

[They salute and go, first door. All are profoundly affected.]

WASHINGTON.

My men marked the road to the camp here in Valley Forge with bloody footprints from their naked feet! And the commissary department writes me daily that supplies are on the way—on the way—forever on the way!

[Shouts and cheering outside.]

MRS. WASHINGTON.

[Running in by first door.] Oh, George! A train of supplies has at last arrived!

WASHINGTON.

Thank God!

THE OTHERS.

Amen!

[Ladies and gentlemen troop in by first door.]

HOLIDAY PLAYS

BILLY.

[*At second door.*] Dinner is served, Gen'l!

WASHINGTON.

All my military family must dine with me to-night!
Come, ladies and gentlemen—We'll drink to——

ALL.

[*Interrupting with laughter.*] To Washington!

WASHINGTON.

No, no. To victory, and then to Peace!

[*All go by second door. HAMILTON detains LAFAYETTE.*]

HAMILTON.

Tell me, Marquis—our Commander, is he not as I described him?

LAFAYETTE.

[*Nods assent.*] Of men the most great, the most superb! But, Colonel Hamilton, I paused at Fredericksburg to do homage to his mother, the venerable Mrs. Washington! But, when I would have sung his praises she cut me short, saying, "Oh, sir, I am not surprised at what my son has done! George was always a good boy! He would not fail to do his duty! [*They laugh and follow the others out by second door.*]

IRVING.

[Rousing himself again from his reverie, moves about.]

Then the triumph, the hard-won victory! The farewell to his army at Annapolis! Home again at last but to be drawn from home to the presidential chair! The splendid statesmanship—the genius for reconciliation—and always the same just, modest, unassuming gentleman! And then those last days at Mt. Vernon—*[Sits again, lost in thought.]*

SCENE III.

[COLONEL LEAR enters with postbag, and proceeds to sort its contents. MRS. WASHINGTON enters, with workbasket, by first door.]

MRS. WASHINGTON.

George! Are you here, my love? Oh, Colonel Lear, has not Mr. Washington returned from his ride?

LEAR.

Not yet, madam!

NELLIE.

[Has followed MRS. WASHINGTON in.] I trust he won't be late. This is the last day I shall have him and you all to myself, dear Grandmamma! *[Placing chair for MRS. WASHINGTON by window.]*

MRS. WASHINGTON.

But, my child, you and Lawrence will continue to make your home here at Mt. Vernon! Mr. Washington and I are growing old, and we need you!

NELLIE.

Fortunately for me, madam! Indeed, had marriage involved my leaving you, my answer must have been no, even to Major Lewis!

LEWIS.

[*At first door, having overheard.*] Had marriage involved my leaving you and my uncle, madam, I could not have been tempted to it, even by sweet Nellie Custis! [*Bows, while NELLIE curtsseys.*]

MRS. WASHINGTON.

[*At window, waves.*] Here comes he now! That drab riding suit of his grows shabby!

NELLIE.

[*Also at window.*] Aye, but how well he looks!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Oh, my dear, 'tis conceded that no one ever looked so well on horseback as Mr. Washington!

[WASHINGTON *enters, first door. General greetings.*]

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Did you enjoy your ride, my love?

WASHINGTON.

As usual, my dearest. Only—I rid in the direction of Belvoir! How I miss the Fairfaxes!—Well, my children?

NELLIE.

Sir, I should chide you for being late on my wedding day, but that you would quote to me your watch which you set by the sundial.

WASHINGTON.

Which, you will grant, is faithful to the sun! Well, Mr. Lear, what brings the post to-day?

LEAR.

The wonted batch, your Excellency. Many applications for your influence in obtaining positions in the event of a war with France!

WASHINGTON.

Alack! Shall I ever have leisure to look into a book again—unless it be the Domesday Book?

NELLIE.

I protest. For years your birthday has been a general holiday.

WASHINGTON.

[*Laughs.*] For every one except the General!

NELLIE.

But to-day—Mr. Lear, pray put by such letters as you yourself cannot attend to!

WASHINGTON.

To-day—well, to-day we will oblige Miss Custis, Mr. Lear.

LEAR.

Very well, sir! [*Takes postbag out by second door.*]

MRS. WASHINGTON.

[*At window.*] Visitors!

LEWIS.

I'll receive them for you, sir! [*Goes by first door.*]

NELLIE.

Let us change good wishes. But first tell me, have you always worn this miniature of my grandmamma upon your heart?

WASHINGTON.

Always since the original took up permanent abode within.

NELLIE.

Then wish me this, that Lawrence and I may always be as happy as you two!

WASHINGTON.

Gladly, my child!

NELLIE.

But what can I wish you? You're the best beloved man in the country—the most famous living! [WASHINGTON *protests.*] Yes, you are, is it not so, grandmamma? Then——

WASHINGTON.

At sixty-seven one might wish for peace!

LEAR.

[*At second door.*] Will your Excellency frank these letters? May he, Miss Custis?

NELLIE.

On reflection, yes, because he would accept no pay for his services in the Revolution, nor as President. Verily free postage is all he ever has taken from his country!

HOLIDAY PLAYS

LEAR.

And without that he'd be bankrupt in a twelvemonth!
[WASHINGTON goes with him by second door.]

NELLIE.

Grandma'! Aren't you the proudest woman?

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Ah, my dear, when Mr. Washington has been absent from me I have always been too anxious for pride. And when he is with me I am too content!

NELLIE.

But surely there's something—some one little thing about which, in your inmost heart, you feel inclined to brag!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

[Puts down work.] Oh, Nellie, if I had to choose—! Yes. 'Tis this: that at West India ports any barrel of flour is exempt from the customary inspection provided it bears the brand, George Washington, Mt. Vernon!

[NELLIE claps hands. WASHINGTON enters, second door, LEWIS by first.]

A WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY PAGEANT 71

LEWIS.

A delegation of Indians, sir, Hodenosaunee, or the Tribe of the Long House, as the Hyroquois call themselves. They come to thank you for your benevolent intercession in their behalf, and to inform you that Harodeganears, as they call you, is the only white man who will be admitted to the red man's heaven! [NELLIE *applauds*.] I have set them down to refreshments!

WASHINGTON.

Good. Later I will go smoke the pipe of peace with them! If only I loved the pipe as much as I do peace! [*All laugh*.] My dear, I have a plan to discuss with them—to interest Congress in teaching the Indians agriculture—can they remain with us a few days?

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Surely. They will be most welcome!

BILLY.

[*At first door announces*.] Mr. George Washington Lafayette!

WASHINGTON.

George Lafayette! Show him in, Billy! He is most welcome!

NELLIE.

[*Laughs.*] And of course he'll remain with us a few days!

GEORGE WASHINGTON LAFAYETTE.

[*Enters, first door, bows low.*] Sir; madam; Miss Custis! Major Lewis.

WASHINGTON.

Welcome to your father's son, dear George!
[*The others also greet him.*]

GEORGE WASHINGTON LAFAYETTE.

I come, sir, to pay my respects to you before I return to France.

MRS. WASHINGTON.

You are returning to France, sir?

GEORGE WASHINGTON LAFAYETTE.

[*Bows.*] To embrace my beloved father, madam. Napoleon, as you know, has recently procured his release from captivity! As my father writes, "The Corsican calls me a noodle, but procures my liberty!" [*All laugh.*]

WASHINGTON.

Great general as he is, Bonaparte cannot understand a man's dedicating his sword to an ideal!

A WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY PAGEANT 73

GEORGE WASHINGTON LAFAYETTE.

While this country is a monument to liberty!

WASHINGTON.

Ah, sir, we are not faultless in that respect—not while we proclaim all men free and equal, yet enslave our fellow-man because, forsooth, he hath a colored skin! Born a slave-holder, I should long since have freed my slaves but for the complications this would cause, to their own disadvantage. But, as my dear lady yonder knows, my will gives them all their freedom, with provision for those to whom freedom would spell beggary! Some day I trust the Legislature will bring about a change in this respect! Then only will the liberty for which we fought be truly realized!

BILLY.

[*Who has entered on the words, "a colored skin," at first door.*] Ahem. Gen'l! Two ole soldiers wishes to pay their specks to yo' an' Lady Washington. Says dey's pussonally 'quainted wiv yo'! An' I reckon dat's de troof, Massa George, case I fetched 'em to yo' mahself at Valley Forge!

WASHINGTON.

Valley Forge! Of course I remember them!

HOLIDAY PLAYS

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Valley Forge! Of course they're welcome! Set them down to refreshments, Billy!

BILLY.

Dat's what I sholy done, ma'am! Yessuh!

NELLIE.

And of course they'll remain with us a few days! [*All laugh.*]

BILLY.

[*Has lingered by door.*] Ahem! Gen'l! Which uniform will yo' wear fo' Miss Nellie's weddin'?

NELLIE.

Which uniform? Why, of course the grand new one that he's just had sent home in case of a war with France!

WASHINGTON.

War! If my country needs me I must not intrench myself under cover of age and retirement. But meantime let us pray that there may be no war! War at best is but a sword sheathed in a brother's breast! [*All murmur assent.*] The old buff and blue uniform, Billy, that has seen real service, and stands for war put by!

MRS. WASHINGTON.

Aye, the dear old buff and blue! That's the best!

BILLY.

Dat's what I done put out fo' you, Gen'l! Yessuh! [*All laugh.*]

NELLIE.

The buff and blue—on second thoughts I love you best in that, sir!

WASHINGTON.

[*Gives MRS. WASHINGTON his arm and leads toward second door, which BILLY hastens to open for them.*] Come; haste! Get ready for the wedding. And then we'll drink our wonted toast, "To all our friends, and to the world's lasting peace!"

ALL.

[*Following, repeat.*] To all our friends, and to the world's lasting peace! [*All go out by second door.*]

IRVING.

[*Rousing himself from reverie.*] Then, when he passed on to the land of departed spirits, his country knew him for his true worth. The world mourned him. Great Britain

lowered her flags to half mast for him. Napoleon twined crèpe with the standards of France. The nation he, more than all others, had helped to found, acclaimed him first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen! But I think his old mother, looking down, may have exclaimed, "Enough of praise, gentlemen! George always was a good boy! George would be sure to have done his duty!" [*He goes out by second door.*]

THE FIRST FLAG

Fourth of July

•

TO JANET E. R.
AND ALL HANDMAIDENS OF THE STARS.

•

THE FIRST FLAG

CHARACTERS.

General George Washington, Colonel George Ross, Mr. Robert Morris, Madam Martha Washington, Mrs. Elizabeth Ross, Sarah Griscom, and George, a child. The men and Madam Washington are in the early forties, Elizabeth and Sarah in the early twenties.

SCENE.

A workroom behind the upholstery shop of Mrs. Ross on Arch Street, Philadelphia.

TIME.

The end of May or beginning of June, A. D. 1776.

COSTUMES.

Suited to the period, season, occasion and character.

STAGE-SETTING.

Two doors, one leading into the shop, the other to a passage. A window overlooks the back garden. Shelf with handboxes, etc. Work-table with work materials, including

several pairs of scissors, sheets of paper, etc. Samples of work on walls. Plain furniture of the period. A bell, supposed to be on the door leading from the shop to the street must ring whenever any one goes in or out of the shop. The paper must be of the dimensions required for making the stars—3 by 4. A completed flag must be substituted at close for the sample brought by Washington.

DISCOVERED:

[ELIZABETH, *busily repairing a sumptuous ball-dress of the period. Shop-bell rings. She puts down work, prepares to rise.*]

~ SARAH.

[*In shop.*] Elizabeth! Where art thou! [*Enters.*] Do not disturb thyself, sister! 'Tis no customer! 'Tis only I!

~ ELIZABETH.

Sister Sarah! 'Tis strange as pleasant to see you at this hour o' the morning!

SARAH.

The fair summer weather tempted me forth. Can I help thee with thy task? I have brought my housewife! [*With workbag.*]

ELIZABETH.

I thank you, sister ; I am setting the last stitch. Reach me a bandbox, will you? That fine, flowered one—to pack it in!

SARAH.

[*While getting bandbox.*] I fear sister, thee dost gainsay the language of the Friends in which thee was reared!

ELIZABETH.

And why should I not gainsay it, pray! Did not the Friends disown me, read me out of meeting! And pray for what offence? For marrying the man of my heart!

SARAH.

Nay! For marrying outside the Society, sister!

ELIZABETH.

Can hearts be confined, like prisoners, within the four walls of the Meeting-House? Wait till your turn comes, Sarah Griscom!

SARAH.

Verily, when my turn comes——

ELIZABETH.

Verily when thy turn comes—May you get as good a man as my poor, dear John Ross! [*Sheds tears.*]

SARAH.

Indeed, sister, I did not mean to grieve thee!

ELIZABETH.

[*Wipes her eyes.*] My dear, there's more of pleasure than pain in my memories! And, there! I must not drop my widow's tears upon my lady's ball-gown! [*Holds up dress.*]

SARAH.

Oh, sister! What finery the world's people do wear!

ELIZABETH.

A fine frock for a fine lady! None other than Madam Washington!

SARAH.

What, Martha, wife of George, commander of the armies?

ELIZABETH.

The same!

SARAH.

How come they here in Philadelphia?

ELIZABETH.

I am told that President Hancock summoned the General hither to a conference with the Continental Congress. And his lady, who is a devoted wife, accompanied him. One of her lace flounces needed some repairs, and the hostess of the City Tavern, where they lie, recommended me to her as a skilful needlewoman! Now if you have done admiring it I'll e'en pack it up and take it home!

SARAH.

Let me pack it while thee puts on thy bonnet! How soft are its folds! The Friends hold finery in abhorrence, but—She must be a pretty sight in this! Sister, how, dost thee think, she came by such a rent—crookeder than our Philadelphia alleys! All zigzag, like the streaks of lightning Mr. Franklin brings down from the clouds with a key tied to a kite's tail?

ELIZABETH.

Perhaps some awkward partner trod a heavy foot upon it in a dance!

SARAH.

[*Hands up horrified.*] A dance? Tie it up thyself! The Friends hold dancing sinful! [ELIZABETH *has put on outdoor clothes which she took from peg. She now ties strings of bandbox.* After a slight pause SARAH again speaks.] Sister, did thee ever see a dance?

ELIZABETH.

La, now, Sally! John Ross was as nimble a hand at a jig as one might see! [SARAH *exclaims shocked, but interested.*] But Madam Washington's style would be a stately minuet, I make no doubt! La, la! Fan in one hand, thus! Skirt in 'tother! La, la! Partner bows—she curtseys, thus! La, la!

SARAH.

[*Alternately stopping ears and hiding eyes with hands.*] Sister! O, fie! For shame! If I stop my ears I see thee, and when I hide my eyes I hear thee! O, fie! And thee reared a Friend!

ELIZABETH.

[*Takes bandbox.*] I'll remove temptation! I won't be long! 'Tend shop while I'm gone and don't let a single likely customer escape. [*Goes through shop. SARAH, alone, puts room to rights.*]

SARAH.

La, la, la! Despite my will the dance tune runs in my head! And despite my will my feet keep time! La, la! Fan in one hand, thus! Fie, for shame, Sarah Griscom! And, yet—la, la! 'Tis like a demon that can only be exorcised by giving it full rein! La, la! [*Practices minuet. Shop-bell, voices in shop.*]

ROSS.

[*In shop.*] This is the place! Mistress Ross! [*Raps on counter.*] What, ho! Elizabeth! Betsey!

MORRIS.

No one within?

ROSS.

She may be in her workroom! [*Ushers WASHINGTON and MORRIS into workroom.*] Pray enter, your Excellency! Well, on my soul! [*They stop short, seeing SARAH who has not seen or heard them.*]

SARAH.

Skirt in one hand, fan in 'tother! La, la! Oh! Gentlemen! [*Catching sight of gentlemen, is overcome with confusion, and runs off, by door to passage. All laugh.*]

MORRIS.

A little Quakeress, practicing a minuet!

WASHINGTON.

And indifferently well, for a Quakeress!

ROSS.

Ho, Betsey! A customer! Mrs. Ross must have stepped out on an errand! Pray be seated, gentlemen!

WASHINGTON.

You feel assured, Colonel Ross, that the young woman is competent to make our flag?

Ross.

Oh, no doubt of it, your Excellency! Since the death of my nephew, John Ross, she hath carried on this upholstery business with skill and credit. And as a needlewoman she is notable!

WASHINGTON.

Good! Then let us profit by this moment to agree upon a suitable device! Mr. Morris, pray favor me with your counsel!

MORRIS.

Which is, that the matter be left entirely to General Washington, who, though ever too modest to admit it, designed the beautiful standard now in use!

Ross.

I second the motion!

WASHINGTON.

Gentlemen, 'tis no light task you set me! The flag we choose to-day will be, not only an emblem for our armies, but for our nation, through the ages, in times of peace!

Ross.

[*Walking thoughtfully to and fro.*] The United Colonies a separate nation! I suppose 'tis bound to come!

MORRIS.

Oh, all signs point that way! One by one the several colonies are following the example of Virginia and passing resolutions favoring such separation, from the mother-country! 'Tis an open secret in Congress that ere long Mr. Lee will offer a resolution of independence! Even now President Hancock is picking a Committee to draw up a formal declaration of such independence. And Mr. Jefferson, on whom the burden of the composition will fall, goes about, puckering a thoughtful brow over the express terms in which he will set forth what he so justly terms our inalienable right, though mere Colonials, to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness! [*The others murmur approval.*]

WASHINGTON.

Our new standard must symbolize our national ideal. Here is the Grand Union flag now used for military purposes. [*Takes flag from a parcel.*] The stripes, red, white, thirteen in all, stand for the fraternal relation of our colonies, while the British ensign in the corner testified to our loyalty for our mother-country—a loyalty that is in our very blood! But now that King George and his ministers would turn that loyalty against us, as a weapon to enslave us, there's but one thing, as free-born men, for us to do! [*Takes pair of scissors and cuts ensign from flag.*]

MORRIS.

The act of separation! A Declaration of Independence!
'Tis well done!

ROSS.

So perish all enemies of liberty! [*Seizes ensign and is about to destroy it. The others hastily restrain him.*]

MORRIS.

Pardon, dear Colonel! Though loyal to the Continental cause I have a sentiment—By birth I am an Englishman!

WASHINGTON.

So are we all, of English forbears! Nor is our quarrel now with England, but with those—alas! the powerful ones—who misrepresent her!

ROSS.

Right! My zeal for freedom carried me away! And now, sir, what design have you up your sleeve in place of this? [*Returns ensign to WASHINGTON.*]

MORRIS.

Did not Mr. Franklin suggest a pattern of stars, borrowed from the Washington coat-of-arms?

ROSS.

Admirable! Worthy of the good doctor!

WASHINGTON.

Ah, sirs; stars by all means for our flag—but let us glean our stars, not from heraldry, but Heaven! Here is a rough sketch which in all humility I offer for your consideration! [*He takes out a sketch and shows it to the others.*]

MORRIS.

Excellent! Faith, it could not be bettered!

ROSS.

Admirable! Worthy of Washington! [*He waves the sketch.*] Our young nation's first flag; designed by Washington! [*At this minute ELIZABETH enters.*] And here comes Betsey Ross to make it! Good-morrow, Betsey!

ELIZABETH.

[*Curtseying low.*] Colonel Ross! Your servant! Your servant, gentlemen!

ROSS.

Now here's a chance to turn an honest penny, and a patriotic one. At my recommendation His Excellency General Washington and Mr. Morris bring you a commission.

MORRIS.

One that calls for deftness, despatch, and discretion—with which qualities Colonel Ross assures us you are well endowed!

WASHINGTON.

A commission that if properly executed shall be as properly compensated!

ELIZABETH.

Gentlemen, I am deeply grateful!

WASHINGTON.

Mistress Ross, think you, can you make a flag?

ELIZABETH.

Your Excellency—I can but try!

WASHINGTON.

Here is one that badly needs repairing. [*He gives her the flag.*]

ELIZABETH.

Why, the Union Jack hath been cut completely out!

WASHINGTON.

Aye. We purpose to substitute a canton of new device. This!

ELIZABETH.

[*Takes his sketch.*] White stars on a blue field, cornered in by stripes of white and red! O most felicitous! But——

WASHINGTON.

Well, mistress. But——?

Ross.

Speak freely, Betsey. His Excellency is the most indulgent of men.

WASHINGTON.

Aye. Pray do so, Mrs. Ross. Our flag will speak to Heaven for women no less than men!

ELIZABETH.

Then, sir, who ever saw in Heaven a six-pointed star? God made them with but five!

WASHINGTON.

True! But cannot mere mortals create them more speedily with an even number? Of course with compass, rule, by geometry——

ELIZABETH.

La, Your Excellency! Geometry has naught to do with it! 'Tis just a matter of folding your paper, once, twice, thrice, four, five times. Then a snip o' the scissors—and your star!

[*Has illustrated, while speaking. The gentlemen exclaim, admiring.*]

ROSS.

I own to some skill in mustering troops, but——

MORRIS.

And I in drawing up a balance-sheet, but——

WASHINGTON.

I can divide an army into five with a stroke of the pen, but—— Mistress Ross, teach us the secret of a five-pointed star!

[ROSS and MORRIS *murmur assent.*]

ELIZABETH.

Then, gentlemen, pray take paper—these sheets on which I draw my patterns will serve—its length to its breadth being as four to three! [*Illustrates, the others following.*] Call your upper margin a, the lower b! Now bring a and b together and fold!

WASHINGTON.

A reinforces b.

ELIZABETH.

Our new corners we'll call d, e, f and g.

ROSS.

Betsey, if I recall my alphabet you've skipped c!

ELIZABETH.

Rather saving it for future use, Colonel. Now all please to find the point on the margin midway twixt e and g. Name it p.

MORRIS.

And pray why p?

ELIZABETH.

That's just the point of the whole matter, sir! [*They laugh.*] Now swing d to p and fold!

WASHINGTON.

By a flank movement d reinforces p.

ELIZABETH.

The new corner will be——

Ross.

C! I see! The centre!

ELIZABETH.

Right, Colonel! Now swing d over the fold c p and crease it flat!

GENTLEMEN.

[*Obeying.*] 'Tis done!

ELIZABETH.

Now swing p over, back or front—'tis the same—till the two folded sides lie evenly as one, starting from c.

GENTLEMEN.

'Tis done!

ELIZABETH.

Now one more sharp twist, turning a square corner, so as to make a Continental cocked hat, whose base shall be c p. [*The gentlemen follow instructions always.*] Now please take scissors, and cut out your hat. Unfolded, you'll see, it is a star!

ROSS.

[*Holding up his star.*] A new constellation! A lucky star!

MORRIS.

[*Doing the same.*] Pointers for posterity!

WASHINGTON.

[*Doing the same.*] The fingers of an infant nation's hand!

ELIZABETH.

I have materials, blue, white, upstairs. If you'll be pleased to wait, with my sister's aid I can run up a sample in no time!

WASHINGTON.

Do so. And accept our thanks, Mrs. Ross, for your lesson in astronomy!

[ROSS and MORRIS assent.]

ELIZABETH.

Astronomy! La, gentlemen! Just a fold or so of the paper, and a snip of the scissors! That's all! [*Goes by door to passage.*]

[*A disturbance is heard in the street.*]

ROSS.

What's amiss!

MORRIS.

Oh, doubtless one of the Whig and Tory street brawls that are so frequent with us! Let us go see! [*He and Ross go out.*]

WASHINGTON.

[*Making a new star.*] I have a mind to surprise my dear lady with my new accomplishment! Bring a and b together—[*GEORGE is heard, crying out for help. WASHINGTON starts up.*] What! A child in distress!

[*GEORGE runs in. Over his own good clothes he has drawn the old red-coat of a British soldier, much too large for him. Also he wears a battered, British soldier's hat.*]

GEORGE.

Help, help! Oh, save me! Save me!

WASHINGTON.

Dear me! The enemy! And in sorry plight! Come, come, little man, what ails thee? Didst fall in the mud?
[*Brushing* GEORGE.]

GEORGE.

'Twas those shameless Whig children called me names and pelted me!

WASHINGTON.

And wherefore, pray?

GEORGE.

'Cause I'm a Tory, I am!

WASHINGTON.

But, Whig or Tory, you must be brave, not run away!

GEORGE.

Oh, I mind not the Whig children! I can throw mud as well as they! [*Pauses for breath.*]

WASHINGTON.

Hm! A politician in the making!

GEORGE.

But they say he's coming after me! He passed this way!
And he'll eat me up alive, 'cause of my uniform!

WASHINGTON.

No? And who is this bloodthirsty monster?

GEORGE.

Why, who but George Washington!

WASHINGTON.

Eh? George Washington?

GEORGE.

Aye! Oh, sir! Save me! Don't let him get me!

WASHINGTON.

I promise you no harm shall come to you from Washington while you bide with me! I'll e'en escort you home. But, first— P will be the point—— [*Busy with star.*]

GEORGE.

What do you? [*Interested.*]

WASHINGTON.

I prepare a message for— Oh, a great many hundreds of little boys and girls!

GEORGE.

A great many hundreds— All your little boys and girls?

WASHINGTON.

Well, truly, I should be honored if ever they thought of me as a father!

GEORGE.

And what is your message?

WASHINGTON.

Wait, and you'll learn it!— Now, fold——

GEORGE.

What is thy name?

WASHINGTON.

Suppose we 'change information, like prisoners of war!

GEORGE.

Agreed! I'm George!

WASHINGTON.

And so, too, am I—George!

GEORGE.

How odd! That's why I'm so drawn to thee! I was named after His Gracious Majesty!

WASHINGTON.

I too was named after a King George!

GEORGE.

Then you're a Tory too!—Halloo! I never noted it till now! Oh, a Whig! A soldier, too! Oh, a rebel! Turn-coat! Rene—rene——

WASHINGTON.

Renegade?

GEORGE.

Aye, that's the name! Oh, I'll none of you! I'll sooner take my chances with George Washington! [*About to go.*]

WASHINGTON.

Wait! Perchance I may justify myself! George, do you say your prayers?

GEORGE.

Surely! Night and morning! Do not you?

WASHINGTON.

Aye, that indeed I do. As doth Washington, night, morning and between!

GEORGE.

Between? Oh, but that is more than called for!

WASHINGTON.

Nathless I find it helps me, as does Washington! Well, one day in my prayers God seemed to tell me that King George was too far distant to understand the needs of the colonies! 'Tis as if your parents were a thousand leagues away from you, with an ocean parting you, and did not realize that you were growing a lusty, strong-limbed lad—no longer able to wear swaddling clothes!

GEORGE.

But King George is not so far— Oh, not near so far away as God!

WASHINGTON.

Hm! It seemed otherwise to me, as to Washington! So we fight, not to harm little Tory boys, but that they may grow up in peace. Now will you e'en think more kindly of us?

GEORGE.

Aye, that will I. And I thank you, sir, for your courtesy and pro-protection. And if the Tory children revile you and pelt you they will have to answer for it to me!

[*Salutes, about to go.* WASHINGTON *salutes in return.*]

WASHINGTON.

Sir, I reciprocate with thanks for your courtesy and promised protection.

[He sits again, and continues his star-making. At the moment MARTHA WASHINGTON enters. GEORGE, about to go, stands aside to allow her to pass.]

MARTHA.

Mistress Ross—where is Mistress Ross? Well, upon my word, George! [WASHINGTON, surprised, drops the scissors.]

WASHINGTON.

Martha!

[At this minute ROSS and MORRIS return. Seeing MARTHA they bow low, while she curtseys in return.]

ROSS.

Mrs. Washington, we saw your coach stop here and hastened to hand you out, but you were too quick for us!

MORRIS.

Has the General let you into this famous secret of his?

MARTHA.

The General never lets me into his secrets! George, what so engrosses you?

WASHINGTON.

What need to let my dearest Patsy into my secrets when she always surprises them!

MARTHA.

I protest, sir, I knew not of your presence here! The young woman who keeps this shop hath darned some lace of mine so dexterously, I came to give her an order for some sets of ruffles, a surprise for a certain gentleman whose linen suffers from his devotion to his country's cause, in the chance laundry work of campaigning! George, what do you try to do?

WASHINGTON.

I seek to make history, my love, in the form of a five-pointed star!

MARTHA.

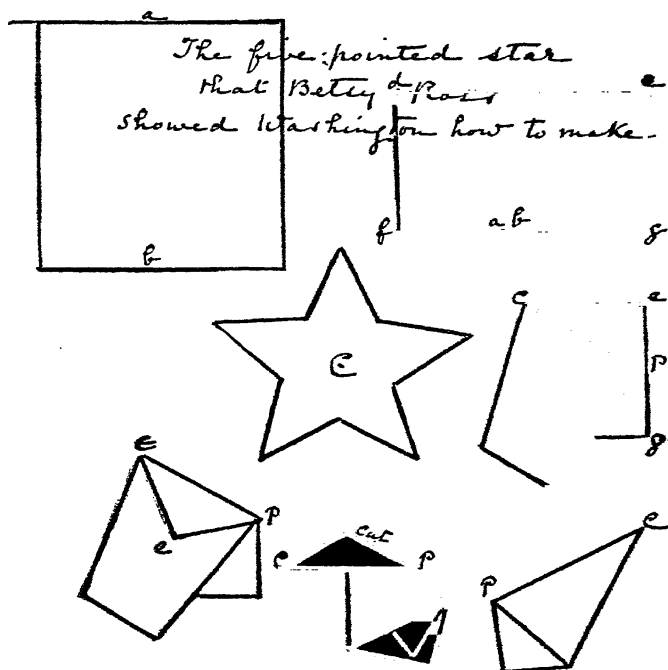
La, la! Let me show you the way! Five twists of the paper, a cut, and 'tis done! [*Illustrating. The gentlemen applaud.*]

Ross.

When men would seek the stars let them take their wives for guides!

GEORGE.

[*Who has been standing amazed, now runs to WASHINGTON.*] Are you indeed he—George Washington?



WASHINGTON.

At your service, sir!

GEORGE.

Then on my soul I'm sorry I reviled thee. I apo-apo-apolo——

WASHINGTON.

Apologize? There is no need! We both are patriots!

GEORGE.

Aye, and gentlemen!

WASHINGTON.

The two go together! Wait! I'd have thee see my message!

[ELIZABETH and SARAH enter with the completed flag.
They stand holding it up for inspection.]

ROSS.

Hurrah! The first flag of the United Colonies—United States!

MORRIS.

The flag of the free. Long may it wave!

MARTHA.

'Tis beautiful. Some day some one will write a song about it—The Star-Spangled Banner!

WASHINGTON.

[*Taking George's hand.*] Look well on it, little one, thy country's flag. Let its message be to boys and girls to honor their country, to fight for it if need be, bravely. But above all to put their trust in God, to love their fellow-men, and to strive for the world's peace!

ALL.

Aye, for the world's peace!

ABE LINCOLN AND LITTLE A. D.

Lincoln's Birthday

TO RICHARD M. R.
AND ALL LADS WHO STRIVE FOR PEACE

ABE LINCOLN AND LITTLE A. D.

The scene is laid in a library. Two doors, one called the first door, the other the second door. A window. A table and some chairs. Books on shelves and table, also a worn one on the floor in a corner.

CHARACTERS

A. D., a small boy.

LINCOLN, the child.

LINCOLN, the youth.

LINCOLN, the man.

[Different individuals are needed to personate LINCOLN in these several phases. There must be no delay whatever in entrances.]

TIME

The present.

A. D.

[With school books, enters, first door, muttering to himself.] Bother! A composition on Abraham Lincoln to write! *[Throws books on table.]* What do I know about Abraham Lincoln! *[Gets out paper and pencil.]* How shall I begin! Wait, all compositions about great men begin by saying when they were born and when they die! That's easy. I can get that from the history! *[Consults book and writes.]* Abraham Lincoln, sixteenth president of the United States, was born in Hardin County, Kentucky, Feb-

ruary 12, 1819, and died in Washington, D. C., April 15, 1865! If I only knew what to fill in with! [*Yawns.*] What do I know about Abraham Lincoln! What do I care to know about him. He's dead! [*Falls asleep head on table.*]

[*ABE enters, first door. He is a small boy, roughly clad. He carries a wooden shovel and a bundle of boughs. Setting these down he shades his eyes and gazes as if into the distance, while speaking to himself.*]

ABE.

Hm! Quite a spell before you set! [*As if addressing the sun.*] If you're smart, Abe, my son, I reckon you'll have time to finish that Life of Washington before sundown! [*Goes to a blank space in the wall, and feels for something, evidently not finding it.*] My book! Where's my book! I certainly left it wedged in that crack! Has one of those plaguey boys taken it? If so, I'll fix him! [*Looking about, catches sight of A. D. and pounces on him.*] Here, you! Wake up! Did you take my book?

A. D.

[*Sleepily.*] Your book! Who are you and what do you want?

ABE.

[*Shaking him.*] Come, no fooling! Did you take my book?

A. D.

Of course I didn't take your book! I have all the books I want of my own! I wish you wouldn't disturb me. I'm very busy!

ABE.

Well, you'll be busier soon, I reckon, if you don't answer me! Did you take the Life of Washington?

A. D.

Of course not! Why in the world should I take the life of Washington? He's dead!

ABE.

[*Struck by the humor of this.*] Ha, ha, ha! Boy, you're dreaming!

A. D.

Dreaming yourself! [*Suddenly stares at ABE.*] Who are you and what are you doing here?

ABE.

Well, now, stranger, that's the identical question I was going to put to you! I presume your folks are the new settlers up the Creek!

A. D.

[*Rubbing eyes.*] New settlers! This is my home!

ABE.

Well, we won't quarrel about that. Outdoors is everybody's home, I reckon!

A. D.

[*Rubs eyes*]. Oh. Is this outdoors? I say, who are you and where do you come from?

ABE.

Why, everybody round here knows me! I'm Tom Lincoln's boy Abe!

A. D.

Wherever have I heard that name! [*Puzzled.*]

ABE.

And, like most folks I come from the place where I was born, Hardin County, Kentucky!

A. D.

Hardin County, Kentucky! Surely you weren't born on——

ABE.

On February 12, 1809!

A. D.

1809! Oh, nonsense! Why, that would make you—let me see, how old! Why, this is A. D.—A. D.—[*trying to remember.*]

ABE.

[*Laughs.*] Well, you are a sleepy head, A. D.! I reckon I must git along now to do my chores! [*Moves to go, by second door.*]

A. D.

[*Detains him.*] But you haven't yet told me how you got here!

ABE.

You mean from Kentucky to Illinois?

A. D.

[*To himself.*] Dear me! Is this out-of-doors in Illinois?

ABE.

Since we aren't birds to fly, or moles to dig under the earth, we came the usual way—on horseback!

A. D.

Oh, is that the usual way to get from Kentucky to Illinois, if you are born in 1809?

ABE.

Sure! Oh, and wasn't it fine, riding by day, and sleeping by night on the ground! We had to take turns walking, for we had only three horses for the four of us: father, mother, sister and me! But we made good time, for we traveled light. You see all our household stuff had gone to the bottom of the Ohio on a leaky raft! We covered the hundred miles in seven days!

A. D.

You call that quick? Why didn't you take the train?

ABE.

The train? What's that?

A. D.

Why, you are a greenhorn! Cars hitched to a locomotive! Choo, choo! Puff, puff! Then—whiz! Off she goes!

ABE.

Oh, father has told me about the engine Stevenson has invented! A. D., [*impressed*] have you ever travelled that way?

A. D.

Oh, scores of times! But I prefer a motor! A little choo, choo, chug, chug of your own, you know!

ABE.

Oh, but don't you run over things?

A. D.

Not if we can help it! We blow a horn to tell people to look out for themselves! Honk! Honk!

ABE.

To think of that!

A. D.

Of course you don't know about airships? and flying men?

ABE.

See here, A. D., if you get too far beyond me my head won't stand it! I expect to fly, myself, some day, if I'm good enough!

A. D.

[*Laughs.*] What an odd boy you are!

ABE.

Odd! Look at yourself! Talk of odd!

A. D.

Me odd! My mother always buys my clothes in the very latest fashion, I'd have you know!

ABE.

What, before the others are worn out? What an awful waste of money; money that you might spend on books! Round here we have only one fashion: what we can get!

A. D.

Well, at my school they'd laugh at you!

ABE.

They'd soon laugh on the other side of the way, then! Laugh at the best my parents can provide for me! This linsey-woolsey shirt that mother spun and wove herself, every thread! These buckskin breeches father made! This cap I caught myself!

A. D.

What do you mean, you caught your cap yourself?

ABE.

When it was running round on four legs and calling itself a coon!

A. D.

Oh, I see!

ABE.

I reckon I've about come to the end of my wardrobe! Oh, no. My gloves! I only use them in cold weather! We grow them ourselves and I have a fresh pair every day! See! [*Takes a roast potato from either pocket.*] When they're too cold for gloves we call them dinner! Father always asks a blessing over them, and when I tell them they're mighty poor blessings mother reminds me there's folks that haven't half so much to be thankful for! There never was such a hand for making the best of things as mother! Laugh, indeed!

A. D.

I beg your pardon, Abe! The fellows wouldn't think of such a thing and if they did I'd thrash them myself, I would!

ABE.

No offence, A. D. But I must find my book! I left it in this crack? Right here, in the wall of our log-cabin?

A. D.

[*Rubs eyes.*] Oh, is that your log-cabin?

ABE.

I reckon you'd know it, if you had helped split the logs for it, as I did!

A. D.

Why, I begin to see! And what a funny window! [*Looking at a blank wall.*] Why didn't you use glass?

ABE.

Didn't have any, so father stretched pigskin across the opening. There never was such a hand for making the best of things as father, except mother!

A. D.

[*Peeping in at an imaginary window in the wall.*] Only one room!

ABE.

No, sir! My own sleeping chamber is up those stairs! Don't you see those pegs in the wall?

A. D.

Oh, yes! What fun it must be to climb them!

ABE.

And I have the finest bed of dry leaves!

A. D.

Dry leaves!

ABE.

Sun's setting. I really must go! [*Picks up spade and boughs.*]

A. D.

What are those for?

ABE.

That's my candle and my slate. I kindle these boughs, and then I do my sums on this spade, and when it's full I scrape them off!

A. D.

What fun!

ABE.

You see, I can only go to school by littles, the days there are no chores to do, so I make the most of any minute I can get! Why, there's my book! [*Drops spade, etc., and stooping, picks up a book from the floor by the wall.*] The wind must have blown it down in the storm and now the rain has spoiled the covers! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

A. D.

But if it's only the covers, you still can read it!

ABE.

But it doesn't belong to me. It was lent to me by a neighbor, Mr. Joslin!—[*Suddenly listens, and looks in direction of first door.*] There he goes now, riding by! I'll go tell him! O Mr. Joslin! Mr. Joslin! [*Runs out by second door.*]

A. D.

Oh, Mr. Joslin! Mr. Joslin! Please don't scold him! He didn't mean to spoil your book! I'm sure he didn't! And he's so poor, and so plucky! Well, Abe?

ABE.

[*Runs back, breathlessly, pleased.*] Oh, thank you; thank you kindly, Mr. Joslin! I'll not forget your kindness, sir! Oh, A. D., isn't he good! He's going to let me pull fodder for him for two days, in payment—and I'm to keep the book! Hurrah! The first book I have had of my very own—and such a book! The Life of Washington! [*Prepares to go, second door.*]

A. D.

Oh, I'm as glad, as glad! Abe, before you go, do me a favor. [*Rubs eyes.*] You see I don't quite understand——!

ABE.

[*Rubs eyes.*] I know what you mean, A. D.! Let's both do it to each other! [*Each prepares to pinch the other.*]

A. D.

All right! At the same time! Together! One; two; three! [*At three they pinch each other; each cries out lustily.*]

ABE.

At any rate the pinch was no dream! [*Rubs arm.*]

A. D.

[*Rubbing arm.*] No, indeed, it was not! Good-bye, Abe! Come soon again! And now I must get to work—[*Yawns.*] and write a composition about the Sixteenth President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln!

ABE.

[*Pauses in the act of going, stares at A. D.*] Abraham Lincoln! Why, A. D., that's my name!—[*He goes out by second door, with boughs and spade, speaking dreamily to himself.*] Abraham Lincoln, Sixteenth President of the United States—

A. D.

[*Has resumed seat at table, and speaking to himself, starts to write.*] His people were very poor, but he was the pluckiest little chap, always trying to learn—and so honest—so honest—

[*Falls asleep.* ABE, the youth, enters, first door, whistling. He sits, feet up on a table, and taking book from pocket, begins to study.]

ABE.

A noun is the name of any person, place or thing—of any person, place or thing! I declare, my mind is like a piece of steel—it's so hard to scratch things on it! There's one comfort, however, it's as hard to rub them off!

A. D.

[*Half waking.*] Always trying to improve himself—
What shall I put next! [*Rises, stretches himself, but stops
short and stares at ABE.*]

ABE.

Well, my lad, what can I do for you? Come, wake up!
What did mother send you for: molasses, gingham, butter,
cheese, or a nice new broom! Forgotten, eh? Well, just
look around the store till you remember what you want!—
Adjectives qualify nouns——

A. D.

Who are you and where am I?

ABE.

You are in the principal and only store of the pleasant
but not flourishing village of New Salem, Illinois, and you
are conversing with its head and only clerk, Abe Lincoln,
at your service!

A. D.

Why, it's Abe!

ABE.

Why——[*Jumps up.*] It's my dream boy, little A. D.!
I must have fallen asleep over this grammar! Howdy,
A. D., howdy! [*They shake hands cordially.*]

A. D.

But how you have grown!

ABE.

Prettier, or lengthwise? They call me Longshanks, hereabouts. And what have you been doing with yourself?

A. D.

[*Yawning.*] Oh, just trying to write a composition about—but you tell me about yourself!

ABE.

The short and simple annals of the poor! I've done some surveying, like Washington, only with just one of nature's grape chains off the vine! And now I am studying grammar and law. Yes, sir; I mean to be a lawyer! Oh, there's one thing to tell you about; I helped take a boatload of cargo down to New Orleans, and while there I saw sights that would make your heart bleed—slaves, chained, whipped, sold at auction in the market place! Of course folks say if you don't like it, go back to a State where slavery doesn't exist! But that's the awful part, A. D.—that it can exist in any State. Here's a line. If you're born on one side of it you are a human being—a man or woman. But born on the other side, if you chance to have a colored skin you're just a chattel, a thing—that may be bought and sold, like this chair!

A. D.

How terrible!

ABE.

Terrible! Boy, it's a national crime! By Heavens, if ever I get a chance to hit at it, I'll hit hard! But, there! I reckon I'm making a speech! It's a way I have when any one is patient enough to listen to me!

A. D.

Go on! I like it!

ABE.

Well, sir; in law, if a piece of property is stolen from you, you don't lose your right to it! Why then should you lose your right to yourself, if you are stolen, eh?

A. D.

Splendid! Hear, hear! [*Applauding.*]

ABE.

Well, then, gentlemen, I say, the dragon's teeth were sown first when the first cargo of slaves was brought to Jamestown in 1620. However—Here! You quit that! [*Looking toward second door, he evidently sees something that angers him and is about to rush off threateningly.*] It's a two-legged brute kicking a helpless, dumb horse! I reckon he needs a kicking himself. [*Runs out, second door.*]

A. D.

Bravo, Abe! That's splendid! Hit him! Hit him again! Make him bite the dust. Bravo!

ABE.

[*Returning.*] I reckon he won't do it again in a long while!

A. D.

Now go on about the slaves!

ABE.

Sirs, as Washington observed, we proclaim all men free and equal, but— There, A. D., I guess you've had enough of me for the present. And I must go now and return six cents to a woman who overpaid me by mistake to-day. I won't be long. It's only two miles away! Good-bye for the present, A. D.

A. D.

Oh, Abe! Do you think you ever will be President of the United States?

ABE.

Me! President! [*Laughs.*] I can answer that better at the end of the chapter, A. D.! It's not wise to swap horses while you are crossing the stream, you know! But if ever I am there's one thing I'll hit, and hit so that it bites the dust, and that is slavery! You just watch! Good-bye! [*Goes out, second door.*]

A. D.

[*Sits, writes, growing all the time sleepier.*] Surveying—grammar—law, while a grocer's clerk—plucky, honest, always trying to improve himself—full of compassion for suffering, whether of man or beast—A visit to New Orleans in charge of a boat fired his blood with the horrors of slavery, and he then and there resolved—resolved—resolved——

[*Falls fast asleep.* LINCOLN, *the man, enters, first door, paces up and down, lost in thought.*]

LINCOLN.

[*To himself.*] The day for compromise has passed. This slavery question can no longer be postponed. It is either the Union or secession!

A. D.

[*Wakes up slowly.*] After serving in the Legislature of Illinois, he was elected— Why—Abe! You are Abraham Lincoln—Sixteenth President of the United States!

LINCOLN.

And you are my little friend, A. D.! Howdy! [*They shake hands.*]

A. D.

Oh, Mr. Lincoln, Mr. Lincoln, are the slaves going to be set free?

LINCOLN.

Please God, A. D.! This country cannot endure, a house divided against itself, half slave, and half free! It has been said that might makes right, but now it is time for us to reverse the maxim and teach that right makes might!

A. D.

Oh, Mr. Lincoln! Are you going to war?

LINCOLN.

Not if we can help it, boy! Not if the slave States will consent to abolition by purchase—by compensating them for their human property! Not if we can persuade them to keep the peace and bring about a happy revolution through the ballot-box! But it's hard work, drawing such a sled uphill!

A. D.

But, Mr. Lincoln—there is a war! See! [*With history.*]

LINCOLN.

Yes, we can't escape history! There is a war—but not for abolition, but to restore union!

A. D.

[*Excited.*] Cumberland Gap, Memphis, Chattanooga—I can hear the guns! How many men are against us in the field?

LINCOLN.

That's always a little hard to tell. When our generals get whipped they always say the enemy outnumbered them by five to one! [*Both laugh, slightly.*]

A. D.

What splendid work Grant is doing!

LINCOLN.

Grant is a great man! The others write and ask me for directions, but when Grant found himself with a lot of cavalry on his hands and no horses he simply wired to ask me whether to dismiss them or turn them into infantry! [*Both smile.*] Brave, splendid fellows on both sides! The pity of it—the pity of it! As Washington said, War is but a sword sheathed in a brother's breast!— [*Suddenly he takes up an imaginary pen and writes.*] The Proclamation of Emancipation—let's see, this is the first day of the New Year, 1863—I have been shaking hands for an hour, and my arm is nearly paralyzed, but if my fingers tremble, posterity will think I hesitated! And the lives and liberties of over thirty million people are involved; our national honor is at stake for all time to come! [*Writes on imaginary paper.*] There, that will do! If ever my name goes into history it will be for this act! My whole soul is in it!

A. D.

Oh, that's splendid—splendid—to have emancipated all the slaves!

LINCOLN.

I have only done what no man could have helped doing, standing in my place! A. D., if you remember me hereafter, let it be, not as one who loved black man or white man predominantly, but as one who loved his country!

A. D.

I will! Indeed I will! But, oh, Mr. Lincoln—you're not going away?

LINCOLN.

[*Who has turned to go, turns back.*] It is 1865, my boy, the war is over and my work is done!

A. D.

Mr. Lincoln, before you go, tell me how it is we dream each other.

LINCOLN.

I reckon it is this way, A. D.: You are part of my country's future and I am part of your country's past, and each needs to take the other into consideration in order to do what is right in the present.

A. D.

I begin to understand.

LINCOLN.

And now, with malice toward none, with charity for all, let us set ourselves to bind up the nation's wounds and do all we may to achieve a just and lasting peace among ourselves and all nations—a just and lasting peace! God bless and prosper you, A. D.! [*Goes by second door.*]

A. D.

[*Stands, looking after LINCOLN, as if in a dream, then rouses himself, rubbing his eyes.*] Abraham Lincoln, Sixteenth President of the United States—I feel as if I had seen him and known him, and received his blessing! I can write the finest composition that ever was about him! [*Seizes pencil and paper, and writes, while going out by second door.*]
—With malice toward none, with charity for all, to bind up the nation's wounds and do all we may to achieve a just and lasting peace among ourselves and all nations—a just and lasting peace!

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THE DULCE ET DECORUM CLUB

Memorial Day

•

TO CAROLYN P. D.
AND ALL YOUNG PATRIOTS

•

THE DULCE ET DECORUM CLUB

A Memorial Day Play.

CHARACTERS

A group of boys and girls who assume the names of flowers, trees, etc.

An old Union soldier with right arm missing.

An old Confederate soldier with left arm missing.

TIME

Memorial Day, morning.

SCENE

A room with two doors, one leading to an inner room, the other to the street. A window overlooks the street. Flags are much in evidence, also banners with the motto of the club. Baskets of flowers stand about. Green boughs are stacked in corners. The girls, assisted by some of the smaller boys, are engaged in weaving wreaths and other Memorial Day devices. The boys, who constitute the band, are in the inner room, practising patriotic selections. Each, boy and girl, wears a flower or sprig, artificial or natural, to show his or her club name. Each girl has her own

pair of scissors, tagged with her name-flower, or a special color, for identification. RHODA, the president, sits beside a table and keeps order with a gavel. FORGET-ME-NOT, the secretary, records forfeits in a book. The girls are singing to the boys' playing, as they work.

JOHNNY JUMPER.

[*The drummer, comes from the inner room.*] You girls! Aren't you ready yet? Slow coaches!

[*The girls exclaim, protesting.*]

RHODA.

[*Raps.*] Order! Order! Don't fidget so, Johnny Jumper! It isn't nearly time to start! Come, girls; make haste! It's nearly time to start! [*All laugh.*]

VIOLET.

How I do love Memorial Day! I wish it came once a week! It is so affecting to think of the heroes who have fought, bled and died for their country!

NASTURTIIUM.

In Fweedom's sacwed name amen!

[*A general murmur of admiration.*]

ALTHEA.

I wish somebody would recite something! Where's Pennyroyal? O Roy, darling, won't you say a nice patriotic piece for sister? Something about people groaning and bleeding on the battlefield?

[*A general murmur of approbation, while PENNYROYAL comes forward.*]

PENNY.

A tholdier of the Legion lay dying in Algierth.
There wath lack of woman'th nurthing, there wath dearth
of woman'th tearth.
But a comrade thtood bethide him while the life-blood—
the life-blood—the life-blood—I don't remember
what the life-blood did!
[*Bursts into tears.*]

ALTHEA.

[*Comforts him.*] You precious lamb!

FORGET-ME-NOT.

Miss President, does he have to pay a forfeit for not remembering about the life-blood?

[*Loud cries of "No, no! The precious lamb! Of course not!"*]

MYRTLE.

There! How does this look? [*Holding up wreath.*]

RHODA.

Very nice, Myrtle. But I think it needs more green!

MYRTLE.

So it does! Douglas Pine, get me some of that green stuff; there's a dear!

DOUGLAS.

[*While obeying.*] Don't you call me dear! I ain't no dear!

[*General cries of "Order! Order! Forfeit! Forfeit! Bad grammar! Ain't—Ain't no dear!" FORGET-ME-NOT records the forfeits.*]

MYRTLE.

I take it back! Un-dear! Some day you'll be sorry, you horrid boy!

BELL.

Scissors, scissors, where are my scissors? Marigold, please lend me your scissors!

MARIGOLD.

I would, Bell, gladly, but it's against the rules to borrow and lend!

BELL.

Well, then, just hand them to me!

MARIGOLD.

Same thing. Besides, I need them myself!

DAISY.

Here, Bell, take mine. If I press them on you it won't be borrowing and lending!

BELL.

Daisy, you're a daisy!

LILAC.

How do you like my anchor? [*A general exclamation of "Very pretty, LILAC!"*] I chose an anchor because it's a sign of hope, and I think dead soldiers ought to be made to feel hopeful and encouraged! [*General laughter.*] I mean, I think living soldiers ought to be made to feel hopeful and encouraged by seeing what we do for dead ones! [*More laughter.*] Well, anyway, the florist let me have the frame at a bargain! [*More laughter.*]

BELL.

Scissors, scissors! Turn your head away, Marigold; I'm going to help myself to your scissors!

LILY.

Bell's motto ought to be Providence helps those who help themselves! [*General laughter!*]

BELL.

Don't be sarcastic, Lily, for I'm going to steal your string.

JOHNNY.

You girls, do hurry! All the patriotic fizz is going out of the band!

RHODA.

We are quite ready, Johnny Jumper! At least, nearly quite! Girls, aren't you nearly ready?

SEVERAL.

Mine is finished! I'm ready! etc.

BELL.

How can I be ready without scissors? Poppy, be a duck, and cut this string for me!

POPPY.

But, Bell, you have my scissors!

BELL.

Have I? Oh, I don't think so! Myrtle, Althea, Hollyhock, Nasturtium, Violet, somebody—scissors!

SEVERAL.

You already have mine! And mine! etc.

DAISY.

Why, Bell, there they all are, in your lap!

BELL.

Why so they are! However did they come there?

DAISY.

And here are your own, dangling from your waist!

BELL.

However did they get there! Now give me one minute! Pennyroyal, darling, won't you say a nice piece about martial military soldiers while Bell finishes her wreath?

PENNY.

Half a league, half a league, half a league onward, All in the valley of death rode the thikth hundred. Cannon to right of them, cannon to——[*Stops short, pulls up sleeve and examines arm carefully.*]

RHODA.

What's the matter, Roy?

PENNY.

I have to find my vacthination mark!

RHODA.

His vaccination mark! What does the child mean!

ALTHEA.

That's the way he remembers which arm to shoot out when he says cannon to right of them! The lamb! [*Hugs PENNYROYAL.*]

BELL.

Now I'm ready!

RHODA.

Good! Now each must write on a card to say who her wreath is for. [*Several cries of "Forfeit, forfeit!"*] Why must I pay a forfeit? I said each and her, not their! [*Cries of "Who for."*] Oh, to be sure! Whom for, for whom! Whom for, for whom! What a silly fuss the grammar does make about one little letter! Each write on a card whom her wreath is for! Unless anybody else speaks for him I choose George Washington! He is my favorite patriotic hero, though he did not die on the battlefield. He exposed his person repeatedly to the bullets of the enemy. The history says so. He might have been killed in every battle in which he took part. And, then, too, we get a holiday on his birthday! [*Writes on card and ties this to her wreath.*]

MARIGOLD.

I'll take Lafayette. He gave up everything to fight for us.

NASTURTIUM.

In fweedom's sacwed name, amen!

LILY.

General Thomas is my hero. Chicamauga, April 19, 1863.

ALTHEA.

The only date Lily knows. And now I suppose you are going to tell us you're related to him!

LILY.

And so I am, in a sort of way, by marriage. My grandmother's step-sister was bridesmaid to his aunt! [*Laughter.*] "To the hero of Chicamauga, from his loving cousin, Lily!"

LILAC.

I shall take a naval hero, since I have the anchor. Besides, I dote on the uniform. David Farragut.

VIOLET.

I wish I could think of someone who made a beautiful end. I do so love last words.

DOUGLAS.

All women do!

VIOLET.

You horrid boy! I won't give you the satisfaction of answering you! [*General laughter.*] I know who made a lovely end. Lawrence of the Chesapeake. "Don't give up the ship, boys!"

MYRTLE.

I choose General Grant, because he brought the Civil War to a close. And then he has such a stylish tomb! [*General laughter.*] He has, I tell you! My New York cousins sent it to me on a picture postal card! [*More laughter.*]

DAISY.

I think I shall dedicate mine to a horse!

SEVERAL.

A horse, Daisy! What horse?

DAISY.

I don't know its name, but it's the horse that won the battle in the piece that Roy recites!

PENNY.

I know what you mean, Daithy. Only it'th not a horthie. It'th a thteed!

*Here ith the thteed that thaved the day,
By carrying Sheridan into the fight
From Winchethter, twenty mileth away!*

[*All applaud, except DOUGLAS, who laughs, mimicking
PENNYROYAL.*]

DOUGLAS.

Thithy!

PENNY.

Don't you call me a thithy!

DOUGLAS.

Thithy! Lithping thithy!

[*PENNYROYAL attacks him. They fight. Other boys
run in, delighted. The girls all talk at once.*]

RHODA.

[*Raps.*] Order! Order! Forget-me-not, please put
down ten forfeits each for Pennyroyal and Douglas Pine!

DOUGLAS.

I don't care! He does lithp!

PENNY.

I don't care! I'm not a thithy!

ALTHEA.

You sweet thing! [*Hugs PENNYROYAL.*]

RHODA.

Is everybody ready?

SEVERAL.

I am. I am. All but Bell!

BELL.

I can't think of any name! Someone lend me an idea!
[*General laughter.*] Well, I don't care. It's too stupid
to hang wreaths on a perfectly empty soldiers' and sailors'
monument! Every other village has a local hero in the
cemetery! [*General murmur of assent.*]

VIOLET.

Yes, and we can't even boast of a veteran!

POPPY.

My father's a veteran!

PINK.

Poppy, he is no such thing!

POPPY.

I tell you, Pink, he is! He is, he is, he is!

PINK.

He is not! Your father is a horse doctor!

POPPY.

It's the same thing, only they call him Vet. for short!
[*General laughter.*]

ALTHEA.

You precious pet! [*Embraces POPPY.*]

MARIGOLD.

[*Who is looking out of window, excited.*] Oh, girls and boys, there goes one now! A real live veteran—in uniform, with only one arm! [*Great excitement.*]

RHODA.

Oh, Sunflower, Bachelor's Buttons, Sweet William, Douglas Pine, go quick, invite him in! We'll ask him to march in the procession!

[*Several boys and girls have run into the street. They now return, bringing in the UNION SOLDIER.*]

UNION SOLDIER.

Well, boys and gals, what's all this to-do?

RHODA.

Club, rise! [*All who are seated rise.*] Mr. Veteran-Patriot, we salute you!

ALL.

We salute you!

NASTURTIUM.

In Fweedom's sacwed name, amen!

[*All sit.*]

UNION SOLDIER.

Don't mention it! What air this, a sewing bee, or a class in botany?

ALL.

Botany! This is the Dulce et Decorum Club!

RHODA.

We go by the names of flowers and trees. I, for example, am Rhoda, which is Greek for rose. I tell you that, sir, not because I think you do not know it, but because I think you ought to know that I do know it!

LILY.

And I'm Lily—tiger, Easter, or simply of-the-valley.

BELL.

And I am Bell—hare, blue, or Canterbury. Any kind of bell.

GRASS.

[*A boy.*] I'm no blooming flower!

FORGET-ME-NOT.

Blooming flower sounds so common. Shall I put him down for a forfeit?

GRASS.

Well, I am common. I'm a weed! I'm grass!

ALTHEA.

Goodness knows you are green enough!

UNION SOLDIER.

That's all right, son. Grass is a mighty good thing, in its place—if you manage to keep it down! [*Laughter.*]

MYRTLE.

The girls are active members. The boys are too lazy to be active, so they are only honorary!

JOHNNY.

Lazy! I like that! What about the band!

MYRTLE.

You know you are only a band because you like to make a noise! [*The boys protest.*]

RHODA.

We meet once a year regularly. This is our first meeting. Our object is to weave Memorial Day Garlands for dead heroes——

VIOLET.

Who have fought, bled, and died for country.

NASTURTIUM.

In Fweedom's sacwed name, amen!

DAISY.

And then we label them with the names of famous generals, with dates of birth, death, and battles. You see that makes us feel patriotic, and helps us remember our history!

RHODA.

Our motto is—Club, recite our motto for the veteran!

ALL.

Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori!

RHODA.

And now translate it! I ask them to translate it, sir, not because I think you do not understand it, but because I think you ought to know that we do understand it!

ALL.

It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country!

UNION SOLDIER.

Oh, I understand it well enough! It's what them as stays at home always says about them they've sent out to get killed.

[*A general murmur of surprise, as if this were a new idea.*]

MARIGOLD.

But wouldn't the killed ones say it, if they had stayed at home and the stay-at-homes were killed?

UNION SOLDIER.

Mebbe! Thar's no telling! The killed ones aren't free to express themselves. It's the stay-at-homes as has the last word!

BELL.

[*Rises.*] I want to make a motion. Whereas—whereas—Oh, won't someone give me the word I want! [*Sits down amid laughter.*]

MARIGOLD.

Whereas our village now has a veteran, I resolve that we move to make him a member of our club! [*Murmurs of assent.*] I don't quite see what sort of a member. He can't be active, because—because—well, just because. And he can't be honorary and play on a two-handed instrument for the same reason. But some kind of a member!

RHODA.

Why not a life-member! That is, during his lifetime!

VIOLET.

[*Claps her hands.*] Oh, lovely! And then when you die we can give you a military funeral, and lay wreaths upon your tomb!

ALL.

Aye, aye!

RHODA.

Carried unanimously, without even having been seconded!

UNION SOLDIER.

I'm sure I'm greatly honored, and I will say that you're as fine a lot of boys and gals as ever I seen! [*Applause.*]

FORGET-ME-NOT.

Do life-members pay grammar forfeits? Because, if so, I need a new book! [*Cries of Oh, no, FORGET-ME-NOT!*]

GRASS.

Please sir, won't you tell us about your right arm?

DOUGLAS.

You dolt, how can he tell about his right arm when he hasn't got one!

GRASS.

That's what I mean, only I didn't like to say so!

UNION SOLDIER.

That's all right, son! I ain't sensitive about what I haven't got! I lost it at Gettysburg!

ALL.

[*Thrilled.*] At Gettysburg!

UNION SOLDIER.

Just by an accident!

ALL.

[*Disappointed.*] Oh, by accident!

UNION SOLDIER.

Aye. The fool that shot me never could have hit me if he'd aimed at me! I ought to know, seeing he was my own brother!

ALL.

[*Horried.*] Your own brother!

VIOLET.

Oh, doesn't he feel sorry, and ashamed!

UNION SOLDIER.

Can't say, miss! He had no chance to express himself, for, you see, I shot him dead—clear through the heart!

ALL.

[*Outraged.*] You shot your own brother!

UNION SOLDIER.

That's war, children! You don't stop to ask who's who on the battlefield! But it was just Jim's ill-luck, getting in the way of my gun and me a dead shot! Plain ill-luck!

VIOLET.

But, Oh, how proud, how gloriously proud, you must feel, of that empty sleeve!

UNION SOLDIER.

Proud! Me proud! Would you feel proud, if you never could shave yourself for the remainder of your days?

VIOLET.

I never thought of that!

DAISY.

I move that we dedicate all the wreaths that are left over to our veteran's brother Jim, who perished so gloriously by the bullet of his brother—I mean, the enemy, at Gettysburg!

SEVERAL.

I second the motion! Aye, aye, aye!

RHODA.

Carried, without even being put to the vote!

UNION SOLDIER.

I'm sure I'm very much obliged—I mean, Jim would be—or anyway mother would be, if she were living! It is a great compliment to the family! Here, what are you a-doing with that gun! Give it to me at once! [*Snatches gun from DOUGLAS, who is just pointing it at another boy.*]

DOUGLAS.

Why, it isn't loaded! I looked down it to see!

UNION SOLDIER.

Empty guns is always loaded when you fool with them!
 Thar's a little rhyme I once learned about that!
*Never with a fool's idea of fun,
 Point at a comrade with an empty gun,
 Because the devil has a way—*[The young ladies must excuse the devil, but I have to bring him in!] *Because the devil has a way,
 Of loading empty guns, they say,
 And in a flash two lives may be undone!* [*General applause.*]

Now, so as you mayn't never forget it, I'm going to take you boys into that thar room, and larn it to you by heart!
[*He takes the boys into the inner room. The girls laugh.*]

MYRTLE.

Isn't it lovely to have a veteran all of our very own!

VIOLET.

And a dead hero, too! Would you call Jim a hero since he was only killed by accident?

VIOLET.

Oh, yes; give him the benefit of the doubt, because if we only knew we might find that he made a beautiful end, uttering last words that were full of poetry and patriotism.
[*There is a knock at the street door.*]

RHODA.

Who's that I wonder! Sunflower, please be a committee to open the door! [SUNFLOWER *opens the door, and admits the Confederate soldier. ALL gasp with surprise.*]

ALL.

Another veteran! [ALL *rise.*]

ALTHEA.

And a gray one! What luck!

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

[*Salutes.*] I beg pardon, young ladies, but could you direct me to the cemetery?

ALL.

The cemetery?

PINK.

Oh, sir! Are you a ghost?

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

A ghost! Me! If I was a ghost with the use of my legs the cemetery is the last place they'd carry me to! But as it's Memorial Day I reckon thar'll be some sort of a festive lay-out at the cemetery!

RHODA.

Sir, I blush to confess it, but our cemetery boasts no hero's grave! The best we can offer is a perfectly empty Soldiers' and Sailors' monument on the green. You see, no one from this village ever went to war!

LILY.

Of course if a new war broke out now we should cheerfully sacrifice our brothers! [*The girls murmur assent. Some boys who have strayed back protest vigorously.*]

GRASS.

No you don't sacrifice me!

PENNYROYAL, POPPY AND PINK.

Coward! Cowardy-custard! 'Fraid cat!

GRASS.

That's all right for you little tots! But if anything in the nature of a boy of my own size or larger calls me coward he'll find down-trodden grass on top of him, that's all! But no soldiering with empty sleeves for me, thank you. I mean to be a fireman, or a waiter. [*Returns to inner room.*]

LILY.

At least, if we can't sacrifice our brothers we will sacrifice our sires and our sons! [*General approval.*]

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Oh, I wouldn't be too keen about doing that, sister. War is a dirty business and miserably paid! And the glory ain't equally distributed! [*Murmur of surprise.*]

LILAC.

But, though you weren't fortunate enough to give your life, at least you gave your arm to your country! How you must glory in that empty sleeve! [*Murmur of assent.*]

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Me glory in it! How would you like to go through life eating off your knife and not brought up to it in that hand?

LILAC.

But, sir—sir—your knife—why, it's your left hand you lost!

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Just my luck! I was born a left-handed man! [*Murmur of sympathy. VIOLET suddenly bursts into tears.*]

ALL.

Why, Violet, what is the matter!

VIOLET.

Oh, dear! These veterans are taking away our heroes!

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

What's that, missy? I ain't taken nothin' from you!

RHODA.

She means you don't seem to think it sweet and fitting to die for one's country! [*ALL corroborate.*]

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

It's more than sweet and fitting. It's grand, sublime, when it's forced on you! But all the same there'd be less fighting among us men if your sex weren't so keen about cheering us on with garlands and glory-talk!

[*A general murmur of surprise. POPPY bursts into sudden tears.*]

ALL.

Why, Poppy, what is the matter?

POPPY.

I never could remember what caused the War of 1812, and now— Oh, it is awful to think it was my sex that caused it!

ALTHEA.

You duck! [*Embraces POPPY.*]

RHODA.

Girls, if no one has any objection, suppose we unanimously elect this veteran also a life-member of our club!

ALL.

Aye, aye, aye!

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

I thank you kindly! And will strive to deserve the honor!
[*ALL sit.*]

MARIGOLD.

Now we have two veterans: one of each color!

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Eh! What's that? What color? [*Starting up.*]

ALL.

Why, you're gray!

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Aye, I'm gray—but what color is the other one!

ALL.

Blue!

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Oh, blue's all right! Next to gray! [*Sits again.*]

FORGET-ME-NOT.

I'd like to enter your other arm in our minute book, sir, if you don't mind telling us where you left it!

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Gettysburg! [*ALL exclaim.*] Just my bad luck! We fired at the same time, and he being always a poor marksman, only winged me, while I shot him through the heart!

DAISY.

But why was that bad luck? You killed an enemy!

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Aye, but though Bill warn't much to brag of, he just chanced to be my own brother! [*All exclaim.*] Mother would have been so mortified!

ALL.

But, why?

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Well you see, mother had two kinds of pride, the sporty kind, and the mother kind. She'd have been so mortified to have Bill miss me, when he aimed at me, and so sorry to have me kill Bill, seeing he was my brother!

ALL.

Bill! Bill!

RHODA.

Mr. Veteran Jim—didn't you say your name is Jim?

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

I didn't, but it is!

RHODA.

Suppose after all you didn't kill your brother Bill!

ALL.

Yes; suppose!

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Young lady, do you accuse me of being a someputy something liar! [*Starting up.*]

RHODA.

Oh, no! But—suppose! [*ALL repeat. Yes, suppose!*]

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Arter me killing him! I'd like to see Bill take such a liberty! [ALL alarmed, exchange whispers. Just then the door opens to admit the UNION SOLDIER and the boys.]

RHODA.

Oh, dear! They must not meet! Quick, everybody! Be a committee to hold Mr. Jim behind the door! [*In a panic the girls seize the CONFEDERATE SOLDIER and thrust him behind the door, holding him there, while he protests, amazed, and tries to get out.*]

UNION SOLDIER.

What's all this noise!

RHODA.

Mr. Veteran Bill— Don't deny that your name is Bill!

UNION SOLDIER.

I won't deny it, since it is, and you seem to know it, Miss!

RHODA.

Suppose Jim were alive!

GIRLS.

Yes, suppose!

UNION SOLDIER.

When I shot him dead at Gettysburg? Never! Nev-er!

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Bill!

UNION SOLDIER.

Jim! Why—what—where—Jim!

ALL.

Hold them! Keep them apart! They'll kill each other!
[*A struggle ensues, the two old men seeking to get at each other, while the children, mistaking their intention, strive to keep them apart. At last with a supreme effort, JIM and BILL shake themselves free and fall into one another's embrace, with exclamations of rejoicing, while the children fall back, overcome with amazement.*]

UNION SOLDIER.

Oh, Jim! After all these years! I haven't had a happy moment since I done it, Jim!

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Nor me, Bill! Wouldn't mother be glad!

ALL.

[*In an amazed whisper.*] They are not going to kill each other after all!

VIOLET.

Oh, isn't it affecting! [*Wipes eyes.*] Like a story! [ALL assent.]

UNION SOLDIER.

Children, this is war! Two broken-down old men, each maimed by the other's hand! Each having missed by accident the other's heart! Do you know what the great General Sherman said of war?

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Bill, I'm ashamed of you, before young ladies!

UNION SOLDIER.

That's all right, Jim! Well, children, General Sherman compared war to a place that is supposed to have a peculiarly hot and uncomfortable climate! And he was right!

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Dead Right! Do you know what Washington said of war? He said that at best war is a sword sheathed in a brother's breast!

DOUGLAS.

But not every enemy is your brother!

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Oh, yes, he is—your brother more or less removed!

UNION SOLDIER.

Then, fight, as the real heroes have fought, for the right, for your country, for liberty—but never go to war, never send others to war, without praying with all your soul for peace!

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER.

Aye, that's it; for the world's peace!

ALL.

For the world's peace!

NASTURTIUM.

[*Voice trembling with emotion.*] In Fweedom's sacwed name——

ALL.

Amen!

[*The procession forms. With flags, banners, wreaths, and music, they all fall into line, the two old soldiers walking together, and march off to the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument.*]

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